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What do BIG K, the JUPITER ACE and ASTON VILLA have in common? – Find the answer on page 23

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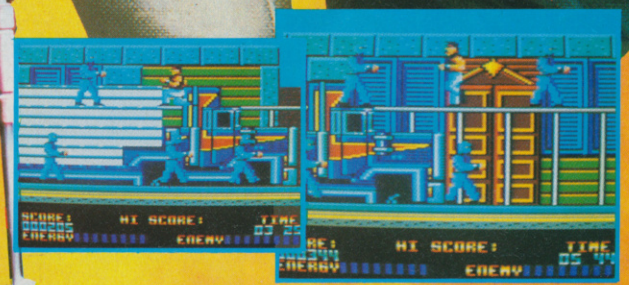

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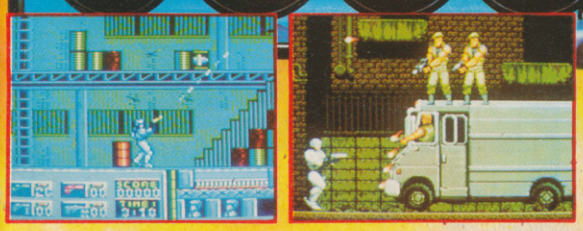

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AND THERE'S MORE...

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GAMEPLAY

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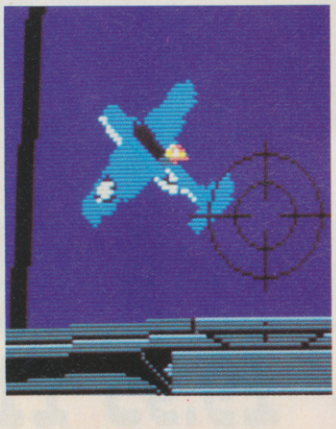

HOBBITS:
AREN'TYA SICK OF EM?

Small furry creatures with smelly feet covered in matted tangled hair, running around all over the place, nicking rings and messing up all yer hard work. I ask you, if it isn't flippin wizards reincarnating themselves and causing trouble by killing off highly trained Orcs (and have you ANY idea how much it costs to highly train an Orc these days, what with an uncertain Stock Market?) it's some other do-gooder stomping round the shop making the flowers grow and the sun shine.

I've just a-bleedin'-bout had enough of this flippin' malarkey, and make no mistake. All I want of life is a nice XR3i painted in Midnight Black, a pair of furry hobbit feet to dangle off the rear-view mirror and a noisy set of Crack of Doom airhorns to put the fear of Darkness into any passing warlocks. I've just sent the boys out to grab some fairies by the Nazguls so I've got enough gold for the deposit, and what happens? Suddenly I'm dragged out of Middle Earth, shoved into an overcrowded computer and forced to stretch out me last days rubbing shoulders with half the smelly Orcs ever created.

It makes me really TAKOUSHI I CAN TELL YOU!!!

One small consolation, though. At least this time around I get the chance to trash a few Hobbits, and with a spot of Bad Luck, even win a few and plunge Middle Earth where it belongs: into Darkness. Maybe committing suicide so I can come back as a dog and give those Ents what they've had coming for a long time can wait a while...

Yours in the spirit of evil,
SAURON.

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Will our tight-fisted Editor hand out a prize this month? Your chance to **find out**.

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The final page, the end, the very last bit of all....

PINKS

The ACE guide to **arcade-style** and **adventure** games starts on page 92 – these games really are the business, so check 'em out before you splash out on a turkey. Thinking of buying a better computer? Read the **facts** on page 98. This isn't just an information desk though, there are things for you to do. Try solving the **ACE prize puzzle** or the **ACE prize crossword**. Then have a giggle at **Nigel from Rigel** and read what diabolical deeds **N'Gar Thrombobo** has been doing this month. Still not satisfied? Peruse the classifieds – you might pick up a **bargain** (or a pen friend), then turn straight to page 108 and see if you've won an **Amiga**.

YOUR FREE GAME

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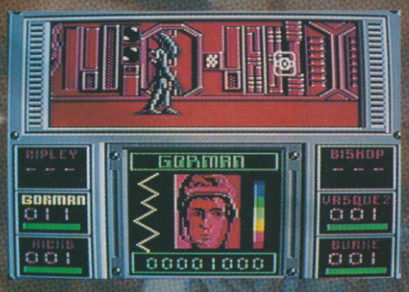
NOT THAT YOU DESERVE IT, MIND



Right yer little creeps, while I'm at it I might as well make few bob telling you about the free cassette on the cover of this magazine jobby. It's *Aliens*, right, the American version, and it's not only completely free it's completely complete. A FULL GAME. All of it. Got the message? Like I say, it's free. Worth more than you've just paid for the magazine. Appreciate it. You'd better, or I'll have you swung round by the Nazguls double-quick.

So load it into your **Commodore 64**, or **Spectrum** computer. Go on, get on with it. Right, now it's time to go back to that really lovely place, LV-426 and try and do damage to that delightful Alien lady. (Can't see why anyone would want to muck about with her, but there you go...)

Six missions await you, all of them nail-bitingly tense, and if you can survive the ordeals that lie ahead, well you're a better game-player than Yours Truly. Turn to Page 113 if you want full details on the gameplay.

Can I be paid in Hobbit steaks, please?

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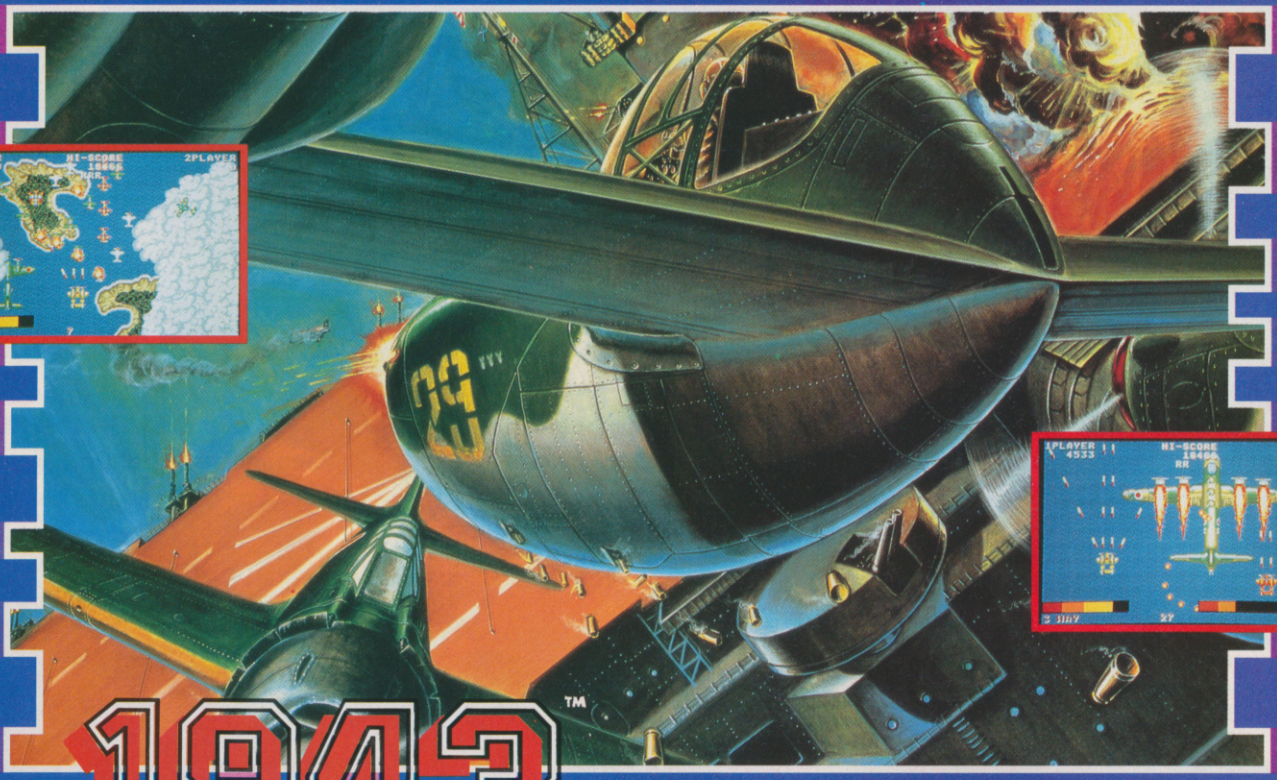

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Screen shots from various systems

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Screen shots from AMIGA version.

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FORMAT

SEGA'S SWEET SIXTEEN

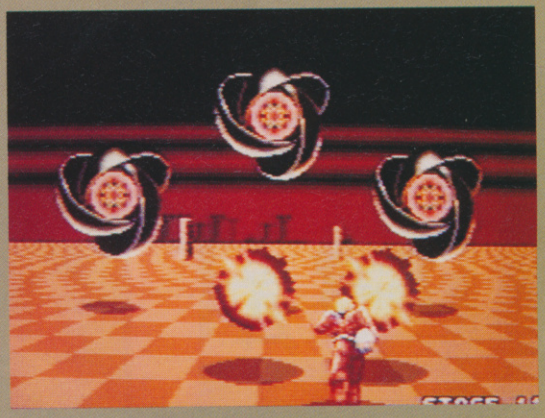
TONY TAKOUSHI test drives a feast from the East in the shape of Megadrive, Sega's new 16-bit console which stormed the Japanese market last November. But if you thought all of the action was arriving from the land of the rising sun, then watch this space - next month ACE previews the UK's own exciting contender, bringing you the full story on the KONIX console...

Something rather interesting travelled all the way from Japan to drop into my more than willing hands recently. It is called the Megadrive, it is the new Sega 16-bit console and IT IS THE BUSINESS! (Please don't shout, some of our readers may have hangovers – Ed). Make no mistake, I love my PC Engine – but this new console will knock spots off it.

The Megadrive went on sale in Japan in early November and it was a complete sell-out within two days, shifting around 50,000 units. The console itself costs £95 pounds (21000 yen) and the games available, *Space Harrier 2* and *Super Thunder Blade*, £24 (5200 yen) each. Don't pay too much attention to those Japanese prices, though, because I'm afraid it's going to be a sight more expensive when it hits the UK market round about next September. Although a final pricing decision won't be made until next summer, it already seems clear that the damage will be in the £200 bracket, or at least very close to it. Cartridges should be in the £30-35 region, but an adaptor may be

Just before the serious action starts – the end of the title sequence...

The hero learns the name of the level about to start...



Explosive action with large, detailed enemy sprites. Just like the arcades...

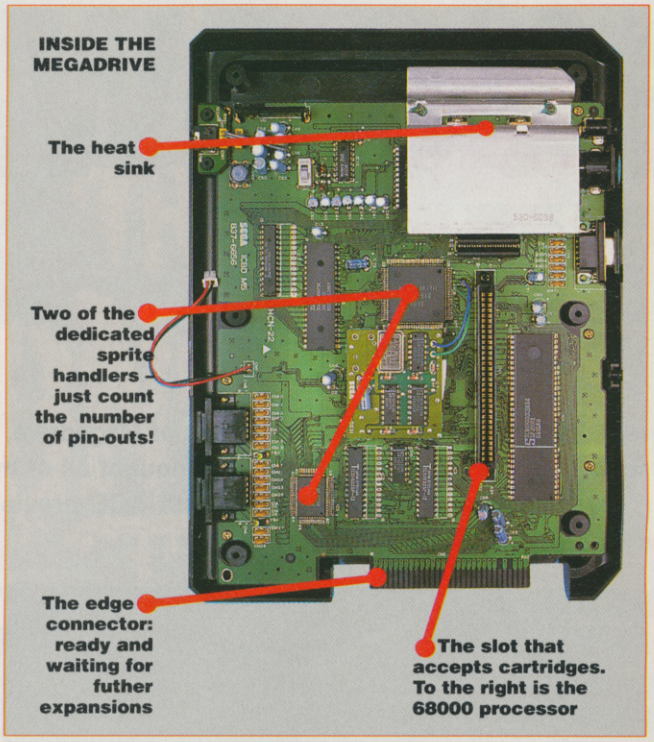
available to allow upgrading 8-bit Sega owners to use their cartridges on the Megadrive.

The console is based on a 68000 central processor (running at 8 MHz) and a Z80A (4MHz). It boasts 64K screen RAM (a choice of 256 colours to any pixel on screen) and 74K internal RAM, with RGB, RF and composite video outputs. Sound comes in the form of FM, a programmable sound generator and pulse code modulation. There is a facility for listening to the digital quality output using your own headphones – these simply plug into the front of the unit – and you can use a slide lever to increase the volume on a scale of 1 to 10 (No kidding! Will it be 1 to 11 on the limited edition deluxe model? – Ed).

The unit has a stylish look to it, resembling nothing more than a CD ROM player. There are two joysticks ports (hooray! – the PC Engine only has one), and the power switch is conveniently situated on top of the unit, as is the game reset button. There is an expansion port on the side, and the restricted information presently available strongly suggests that a modem link is planned, allowing friends to ring each other and connect or even play games simultaneously down the phone (WOW!!)

The back of the machine is thoroughly clean and simple – just the power slot, a composite/RF video out and third socket for RGB output.

At the time of writing, I have only one game for this machine, *Space Harrier 2*, although *Super Thunder Blade* should be with me by the time you read this article. Even so, I can tell you that words barely do justice to a console of such processing power and superlative software. It is more an arcade experience than home games playing! My PC Engine is still a superb machine with brilliant games, but technically the Sega machine is light years ahead – quite simply the best home games machine in the world.



Switch on the power and you are faced with the Sega logo pulsing away in gorgeous shades of blue. Then the words 'Space Harrier 2' zoom in from the distance and the number 2 rotates, making a sharp metallic ping as it slots into place under the title.

You can alter the play options through a menu obtained by pressing any one of the three fire buttons on the kidney-shaped two-hand joypad control. The Sound option allows you to listen to any of the 19 spot/tunes from the game; Game Level lets you choose from Easy, Normal or Hard; Rapid Fire is exactly that, allowing you to select auto fire (sure does save the trigger finger!); and finally Direction is for those of you who like their joystick controls inverted.

On pressing Start you are shown an intro screen with the hero running up to a monitor displaying the message: Alert, Fantasy Land Falls Into Crisis Now. Press Start again and you are faced with the scrolling backdrop and the name of the first level (Stuna Area). You can choose any of the first 12 levels by pressing the pad left/right, but if you do choose any level other than 1, when you complete level 12 you return to level 1 and cannot play the remaining levels.

As with the original *Space Harrier* there is digitised speech, so if you hit an object you get the familiar 'Aaargh!' and then 'Get Ready'. This is the clearest I have ever heard digitised speech from a games machine, or any computer.

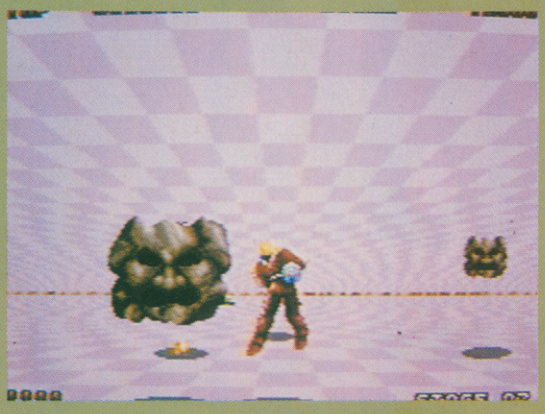
The screen layout is simple, with lives in the bottom left corner, stage number in the bottom right and score in the top right. It plays just like the original *Space Harrier* with you moving around the screen zapping like crazy, although the attack patterns are different and the graphics are like you have never seen before. They are H-U-G-E, incredibly detailed and exceptionally finely coloured. So smooth, and not a raster glitch in sight, even when an alien nearly fills the screen.

The end-of-wave monsters had me reeling and gasping for breath – the screen was packed with missiles, aliens, gunfire and explosions, and nothing slows down! The levels with the ceiling coming down and scrolling above you are straight out of the arcade.

The console is basically derived from the original *Space Harrier* arcade machine and I could not resist opening it up and having a peek inside (You little terror – Ed). The chip count is very small with the familiar 68000 taking up plenty of space, and the dedicated sprite handlers were plain to see with over 200 pin outs. The hardware is said to support 8-bit Japanese Sega cartridges, but these are different to those in the UK and US anyway, and the word is that you'll need to shell out something like £20 for an adapter over here.

Look at the screen shots and just maybe you will get an idea of the power of this games machine. The graphics, sound and processor speed are unsurpassed in the history of home games consoles OR COMPUTERS (You're shouting again – Ed).

The Sega 16-bit Megadrive is due for release in late 1989 and realistically will not be here in any kind of quantity for some time after that – after all, they can barely cope with their home market demand at the moment...



Stage 7 and the on-screen hero continues the battle, this time between 'floor' and 'ceiling'.

The size of that sprite! And it moves really smoothly...

'Just like the arcade machine' – Stage 12, and another monster sprite looms up...

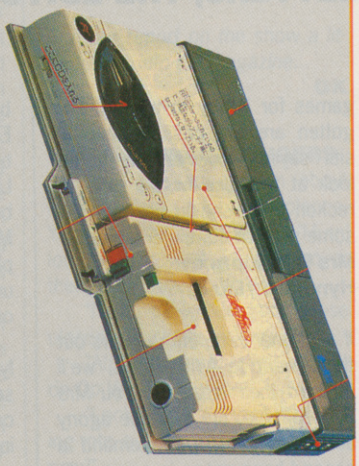
PC ENGINE - THE STORY SO FAR

NEC's PC engine caused a storm on its launch in Japan 15 months ago, and around 500,000 units were sold within the first month. But soon controversy raged as to whether the Engine would survive – software was slow coming out for it and there was already talk of 16-bit machines from Sega and Nintendo.

Fifteen months on, the number of games for it has risen to 21 including games by JVC, NAMCO and Taito as well as Sega cover versions. Curiously Sega does not appear to see the Engine as a great threat, demonstrated by the fact that the company has granted it licences for *Fantasy Zone* and *Space Harrier* (the original coin-op).

On the hardware side it offers small and large rapid-fire joystick units, a multi-tap unit allowing up to four people to play simultaneously, and a VA Booster which allows owners to run the Engine through a monitor and their hi-fi. NEC has also shown working prototypes of its CD ROM games unit with a couple of games, *Street Fighter* and a role-playing game. There are also printer link-ups, and there's a working prototype of a portable Engine that can be used on the move.

Clearly the PC Engine is far from dead, and indeed the announcement of the 16-bit Sega only serves to fuel speculation as to where the market is going. Nintendo has a commanding position in the world console market, but unless it makes an official announcement regarding its own 16-bit console soon, that company could well find itself with an uphill battle against the established Engine and Sega machines.



Above: the Engine connected to a CD ROM drive – note the special Japanese annotations to this picture...

Left: the basic package – Engine and controller. In real life, the lead is much longer...

Below: Add-ons that are available in Japan include two improved controllers, a unit that allows four players to join in the fun, and a sound and video enhancement unit.

PC ENGINE VS SEGA MEGADRIVE

There is no hard and fast answer as to which console I prefer. The Engine has a wide, top quality selection of games, and I have been playing these happily on it for the last 12 months or so. It has a good choice of peripherals, and the CD ROM and portable games unit bode well for the future.

The Sega, on the other hand, has far more potential, and obviously games like *Outrun, Afterburner* and *Galaxy Force* will be released for it. Whether or not there will be any third party software for the Sega, which is not known at this stage, could be a deciding factor at the end of the day.

Disregarding personal preferences, it is in any case too early to make any kind of accurate guess as to which of these machines will dominate. The Sega is a hot favourite, but a lot depends on software and hardware support. The Engine is established and has a name for itself.

The battle is being fought in Japan at present, and we will see the outcome (if indeed there is a clear winner) in about 12 months from now...

THE ENGINE LIBRARY

R-TYPE 1 & II
FANTASY ZONE
GALAGA
CHAN AND CHAN
BASEBALL

KUNG FU
VICTORY RUN
NECROMANCER
WATARU
ALIEN CRUSH
MONSTERLAND
SHANGHAI
YU YU JINSEI

TENNIS
GALAGA 88
WONDER BOY IN WONDERLAND
THE LEGENDARY AXE
SPACE HARRIER
DUNGEON EXPLORER
DRAGON SPIRIT

The Editor is still not impressed. (He's a hard man.) After much negotiation he has been persuaded to split his £100 star letter prize between two correspondents this month – Andrew Waterhouse and Gareth Burge, who each receive £50 of software of their choice, mainly out of sympathy for their respective plights.

Could you be the first to clean up and collect that £100 worth of software? Send your missives to ACE LETTERS, THE EDITOR, 4 QUEEN STREET, BATH, BA1 1EJ.

JELLY HANGLIDER

I recently bought a copy of *Virus* (Amiga Version) following the rave reviews you gave this game in your mag, and to put it mildly, I am extremely disappointed with it!

The "terrifyingly responsive" hoverplane has (I imagine) the flying characteristics of a jelly hanglider and its "heavy armament" is as much use as a peashooter in a gale! If this game is to be the "*Defender* of the 1990's" then Lord help us.

I tried using the tips published in ACE to help, but these too proved useless. The only tip I would give a potential *Virus* buyer is: Don't Bother. This is one game I will certainly fire and forget!

Philip Hargreaves
Cookridge, Leeds

Were we right, or were we wrong? Letters from Virus *fans and* Virus *enemies welcomed.*

GK

DEMO DEMO

After reading ACE issue 15, I went to the section for next month. I saw the words *Dragon Ninja* demo. I went crackers over the news. After reading the next bit I felt like tearing it up, because it was only for the Speccy and 64 on tape. I have an Amstrad CPC 464. Where are the Amstrad demos?

Yasdev Bagri
Bradford

Imagine your surprise when you found a Dragon Ninja *demo on the cassette last month! Sadly, we couldn't fit an Amstrad version of* Aliens *on this month's cassette – it was just too long.*

GK

SPOUSE INVADERS

Being the wife of an Amiga owner I'd like to know if I am the only spouse to be a 'computer widow'. I'm sure I can't be. There is nothing worse than being ignored because hubby has got a new game. Instance: hubby makes passes at you throughout the day then 'knock,knock' at the door, a fellow user brings some new games for hubby to try out. Forgotten are the passes while he sits saying "look at this game, look at that one or the other". I reckon there should be a club of some sort for computer widows.

Mrs D P Courtney
Hyndburn, Lancs

If any other computer widows out there want to write to us, we'll forward their letters to you Mrs C. Meantime, our in-house agony auntie suggests you demand a second honeymoon in a romantic location which electricity hasn't yet reached!

GK

THE DUNGEON FOR COPYING?

I've been a computer 'gamer' for six years, and unfortunately, in my opinion, games haven't changed much. Six years ago 90% of releases were probably arcade based – is it any different today? Now, I really enjoy a good arcade game and there should always be a space in the market for them, but surely games like *Dungeon Master* and other innovative software like *Virus* and *Nebulus* point the way forward.

Another point: when some big arcade licence is released, umpteen clones flood the market as rival companies try to outdo and outsell the 'original'. *Dungeon Master* sold in large numbers, so why have rival companies not tried to outdo it? *Dungeon Master* is an incredibly challenging and enjoyable game, and would it not be a step forward to have ten *Dungeon Master* clones to pick from this Christmas rather than ten *Afterburner* clones?

S Quinn
Ayr, Scotland

Keep your eyes peeled for Chaos *and* Dungeon Master II, *from FTL.*

GK

PRIZE LETTER

BORING AUNTIES

Why the bloody hell can't the BBC get it right? The programme I'm complaining about is the Beeb's new series on computers, Electric Avenue. What a waste of time, I mean, c'mon, it's just Micro Live with another name. I remember at the time of the original Micro Live there was a lot of complaint about it being trivial and uninteresting to the vast majority of computer users.

This new programme is exactly the same, and would probably serve better under the title 'Applications for Large Computers costing Over a Million Quid'.

What we need is a programme for home computers, covering, say, the same range of computers that ACE does. Imagine reviews of your favourite games programs where you could actually see the animation and hear the sound. MIDI application, interviews, software development, previews and reviews would never be the same again.

Gareth Burge
Glasgow

Couldn't agree more, Gareth. But it seems that TV producers either don't understand the computer entertainment market, or don't want to. Perhaps this is just as well for us in the magazines field, so maybe we'd better not print this...

GK

PRIZE LETTER

16-BIT RUBBISH

About a year ago I sold off my trusty C64 in favour of an ST. During my first year of ownership I have only seen and played about five or six games which my 8-bit couldn't cope with. Putting it bluntly I am sick of software companies re-hashing 8-bit game styles with done-up graphics and sound. Instead of multi-quest games with real depth we are expected to palate coin-ops and shoot-em-ups.

Admittedly, Infocom, Rainbird and Cinemaware produce game worthy of the 16-bit machines, but

NEXT MONTH!

Issue 18 of ACE goes on sale on 2nd February. Make an appointment with your newsagent now, as the next issue is packed with Exclusive news, as well as the usual mix of hot reviews and essential features...

■ The OFFICIAL story on the Konix Console – full details and Exclusive pictures from Konix themselves.

■ The inside story on Rainbow Arts, German Software developers extraordinaire – including Exclusive news on their new arcade machine.

■ An Exclusive look at the first commercial CD ROM entertainment product.

(That's enough Exclusives – Ed)

in general we have to make do with games that a Spectrum could manage.

Andrew Waterhouse
Retford, Notts

Generally, you're right, but the tide is set to turn. War In Middle Earth, reviewed this issue, is one of a new generation of games that use the potential of 16-bit machines more fully. Look out for our detailed preview of a game from Electronic Arts which is booked to appear next month. It'll knock your socks off!

GK

ROLE PLAYING THESIS: PART 1

As a role player of eight years' standing, I think that I should point out some problems inherent in the arcade approach to role-playing that most computer RPGs exhibit in some fashion. These problems include: the player controlling all members of a party, the high preponderance of combat to talking encounters, the problem of limiting the area of movement to a reasonable area, and the highly structured approach to the RPG, inherited from the parent table-top system.

Most of the CRPGs to date bear more resemblance to tactical, squad leader wargames than true RPGs. This means that the player decides which order the party should move and fight in, what specialist should deal with a certain problem, and so on. In most RPGs, it isn't often that the person with the best skill deals with the obstruction ahead: it is usually the character at the front who does it. For example, a fighter may wish to disarm a trap to get to the riches, rather than allowing the thief to do it. This somewhat chaotic approach to life is masked by the total control of a party by the player in a game such as *Heroes of the Lance*.

The whole point of most serious RPGs is to create a valid and internally consistent alternative persona for yourself for the period of the game. This character is easily developed in a series of interlinked, episodic adventures with a continuous or changing set of companion characters, which allow for a large degree of character interplay. The nearest computer game equivalent to this is the traditional, one person adventure game, in which a quest is undertaken on an individual basis. This is the form of computer program in which personal interaction with the computer is at its greatest. In this situation, the player is taking on the role of a mage, thief, fighter or spy on a very simple level, as he has skills within the game that he does not possess in real life. (How many people do you know that are capable of creating a fireball?) (*Two* – **Ed**)

The latest generation of adventures, such as *Ingrid's Back*, contain within them a set of characters which interact with the player and respond to him in an individual manner. This theme of interactive, computer-generated 'people' within the machine is the direction in which I think true CRPGs should go, rather than in the current direction of tactical hack and slay programs, such as *Heroes of the Lance*.

The ideal CRPG would have a quest-type format, to limit the game area to be within the scope of the computer, and include the player as the leader of a group of individuals who all have a personality. This would move away from a game in which the player controlled all the members of the party, towards the traditional independence of thought and action of table-top RPGs. The closest approach to this ideal that I have so far seen is in *Star Trek*, where individual crew members gave you advice, albeit in an extremely limited way. Fine-tuning the program to include a combat bonus for a good leadership skill or fighting skill, as in *Defender of the Crown*, seems to be the limit of most CRPG programs at the moment, and the more fundamental problems outlined above need to be addressed before CRPGS come close to matching the pleasure of a good RPG.

Chris Smith
Birmingham

Anyone else care to add to the RPG/NPC/CRPG debate initiated here? In the meantime, check out the latest on role-playing for your computer in our new-style Adventures section...

GK

ALTERNATIVE FREE PLUG

May we, through your letters page, thank all those who attended the first Alternative Micro Show at the Aston Villa Sports and Leisure Centre on Saturday 12th November, for helping make it such a success. We had such a good response from both exhibitors and visitors that next year's show will be held at the Bingley Hall Stafford, which boasts nearly 100,000 sq ft of exhibition space. So if you are a Dragon/Einstein/QL/MSX/Lynx/Texas TI/Oric/Jupiter ACE/Enterprise (or in fact any of the non-mainstream micros) enthusiast then make a date for Saturday 11th November 1989. Thank you all once again.

Mike Smallman
Ipswich

See our report on the show a little further into the magazine...

GK

VIOLENT RIGHT WINGERS

People winge on and on about how coin-ops encourage violence. You know the sort I mean. "Mum! look at that wicked arcade over there! Can I 'ave some dosh?"

"Now remember son, those places encourage violence. No!"

"Ah, get on! I only wants a go on *Op Wolf*"

"Look, we don't want you turning into a violent little boy, do we now?"

Don't these people know what they're on about? Obviously not. I mean, you see so many kids jumping around with shurikens and .22 automatic rifles after playing *Op Wolf* or *Double Dragon* don't you? Sorry, I'm only being sarcastic. But people do say these things. Perhaps they aren't aware of what distress and crime fruit machines cause. There was an article in the local paper recently about a 16-year-old who spent 70 quid a week down the local arcade. He started when he was 12, and is now so 'addicted' that he reverts to crime to get all the dosh he needs. But when your local chippy installs *Street Fighter* or *Thunderblade* (wish ours would!) people start complaining that every kid'll start beating people up! So why do people accept fruit machines and slag off innocent arcade games? I mean, the most modern One Arm Bandits are programmed to give out only 20% of the total that mugs shove in 'em. So in theory, 80% of the quid coins you lob down that slot go straight into Mr Amusement's sticky little hands. On the other hand, when you jam 20p into the guts of *Super Hang On*, at least you are guaranteed some breath-taking fun.

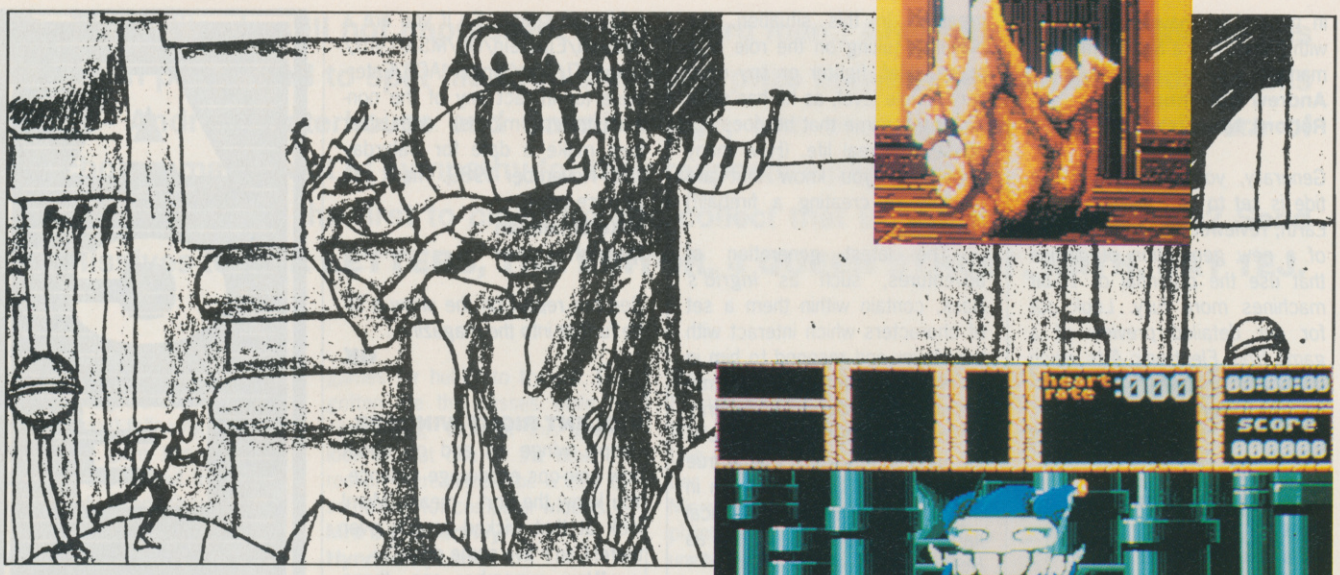
Robert Stephens
Sidmouth, Devon.

And only the other week a Conservative MP was planning to raise Questions In The House, calling for censorship on the content of computer games...

GK

ACE LETTERS

ADVANCED COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT



It's all very well looking at a game when it is nearing completion, but in order to get an idea of the way programmers, artists and game designers work on a concept, you need to go back to the drawing board stage. In the first of an occasional series, a strange game due soon from the Rainbird stable gets the treatment.

WEIRD DREAMING

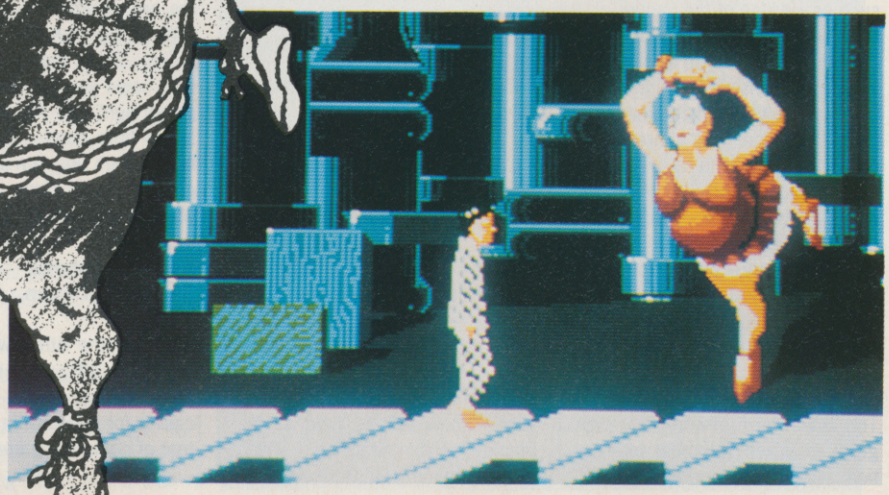
Judging by the images contained in *Weird Dreams*, Herman Serrano must find it difficult to get a good night's sleep... The graphics and basic game concept for this release, due soon from Rainbird, are products of Herman's fertile imagination. "I wanted to do a game about phobias or nightmares, set in a land where things are not what they appear to be", he explains. Clearly he is influenced by the Surrealist movement.

Herman first encountered computers while he was on a graphics course at Kingston College – he admits to having played a couple of arcade machines (the classic *Tempest*, and *I Robot*) but had no experience of playing computer games when he first started meddling with a friend's machine. Loading screens for Rainbird games followed, as the concept for *Weird Dreams* gradually evolved.

Programmer on the project is James Hutchby, who so far hasn't exactly concentrated his programming effort on the entertainment market – he admits to writing a chess program about five years ago, and recently undertook a conversion for Hewson, but most of his code has been written for more serious applications. Nevertheless, he has played a significant part in the evolution of the *Weird Dreams* project: "Herman delivered the sprites", he explains, "and I built the game around his ideas and graphics, contributing the more detailed gameplay." A third person, Tony King, contributed some of the ideas at an early stage in the development but apparently dropped out from the project.

James has completed the ST version and is currently completing the Amiga program as other coders work on 8-bit versions. Herman is already thinking about *Weird Dreams II*, but is now creating graphics for two games under production for Activision/Mediagenic: *Exodus* and *Driftlands*. ●

Herman's original sketches for the Toyroom locations, with the resulting ST screens for comparison.
(Inset above) A corridor scene that includes a real surrealist's nightmare – try to sleep well after seeing that orange monster!



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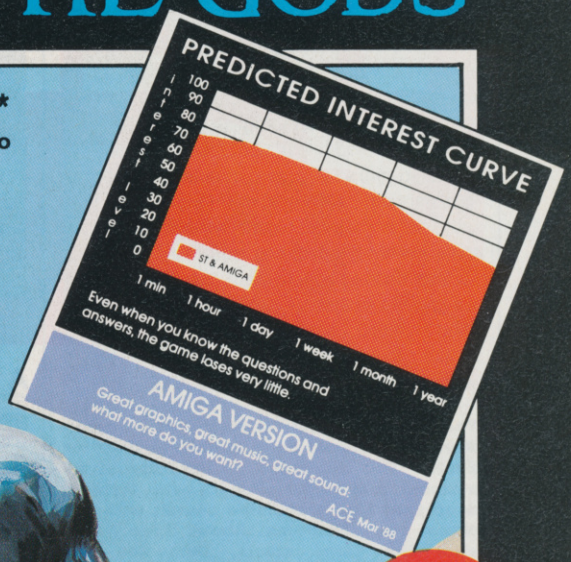

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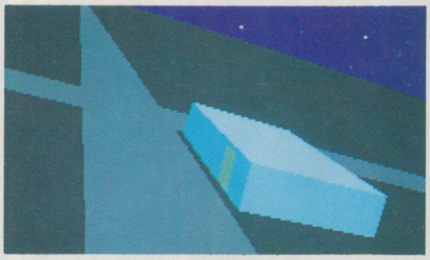
WELCOME TO 1989

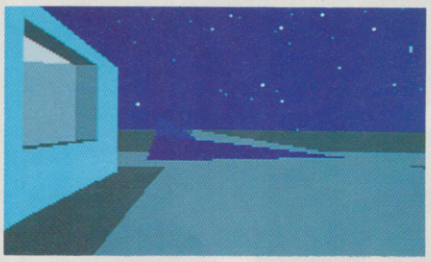
A host of hot games are making their way towards completion as you read these pages. Here's a quick selection of the best contenders in the race towards software perfection.

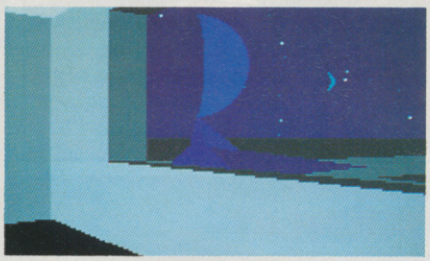
DAMOCLES ● Novagen

The sequel to Paul Woakes' classic game *Mercenary* should be complete in time for Easter. The Damocles of the title is an asteroid that is winging its way through deep space on a collision course with the planet you call home. About three hours after the game starts, Damocles will destroy everything you hold dear, so the major task that confronts the player is preventing that collision.

Over 18 months of development have already gone into the program – with short breaks to help Hellbent along – and Paul Woakes looks likely to excel himself. The demo we were treated to was nothing short of stunning: this time the landscapes are filled 3D, and wandering around on the surface of one of the nine planets or eighteen moons is a believable experience.







ST – From the top down: flying down towards the surface of a planet, you notice a building next to a roadway... after landing, you leave the spaceship, enter the building, look out through the window and you can see your parked spaceship! Move around inside a building, and the view through a window changes as the viewpoint shifts – an incredible piece of programming, to say the least.

Amiga – Blasting through space on a money-earning mission in *Cosmic Pirate*.

COSMIC PIRATE ● Outlaw

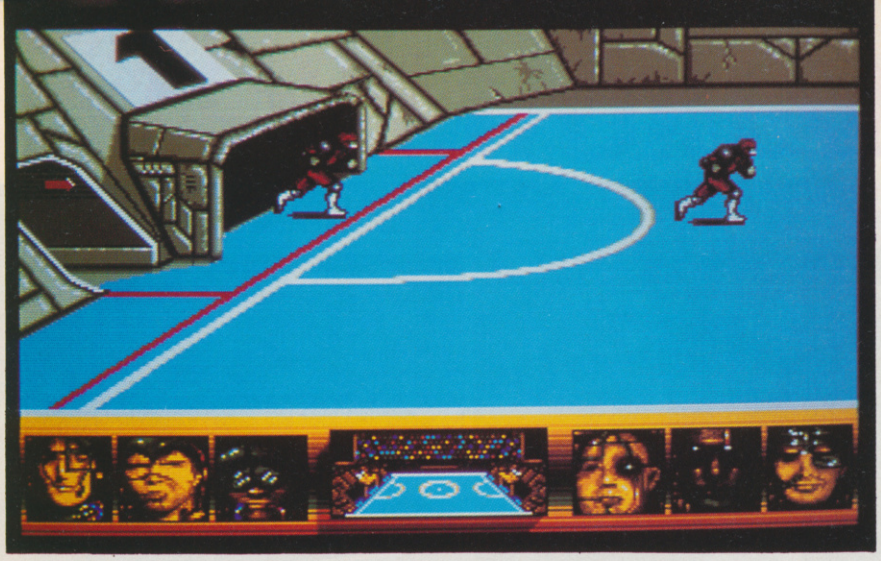
Zippo Games, whose portfolio of work includes an abundance of games for Japanese console manufacturers, have finally decided to write a game under their own name. Due on the Amiga any day now, with the ST version to follow by the end of February, *Cosmic Pirate* offers the opportunity to rise through the ranks of space pirates, play video games and make piles of dosh.

Select missions, travel through space and land on planets, shooting everything in sight in the quest for booty. It's a man's life riding the cosmic waves – so get in training on the simulators back at base...

ARCHIPELAGOS ● Logotron

A game that is claimed to have the feel and quality of *Sentinel*, *Archipelagos* sets you the task of linking a series of stones scattered around a group of islands. Pods have to be collected in order to build chunks of land, while trees and poison-filled eggs conspire with a land-eating monster to thwart your aim. ST, PC and Amiga versions are scheduled for release this Spring.

ST – the *Virus*-esque landscape that you build on to, in *Archipelagos*



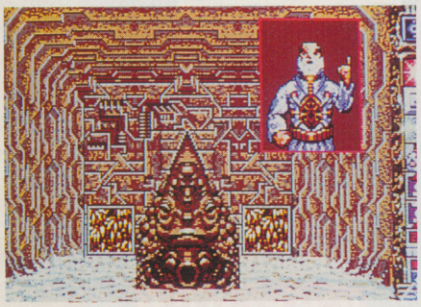
Amiga – taking to the pitch in the futuristic arena where *Skateball* is played...

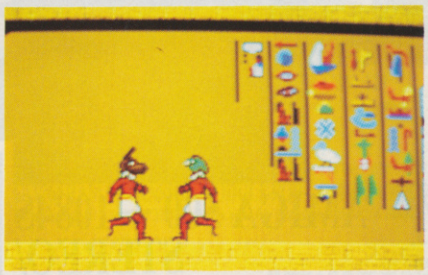
SKATEBALL ● Ubi Soft

Violence is combined with roller-skating skills in an action game from across the channel – *Skateball*. Also due from France any day now is *Iron Lord*, a strategy/arcade game in the interactive movie mould...

TEMPLE OF THE FLYING SAUCERS ● Exxos

Coming soon from Infogrames on the Exxos label is this underground graphic adventure of rescue and conquest. And that's all the French people are telling us at the moment...



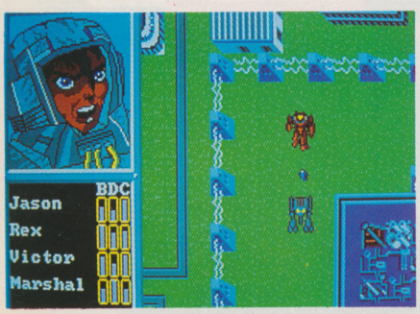


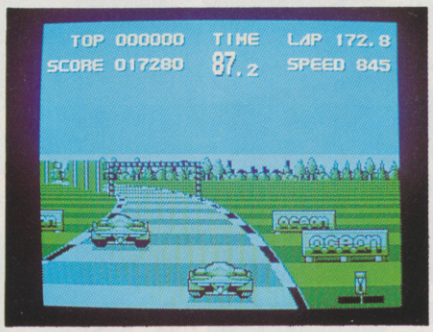
EYE OF HORUS ● Logotron

So that's what Denton Designs have been working on – an Egyptian arcade adventure. Based on the ancient legend of Horus, the aim is to retrieve the body of Osiris: trouble is, it's in fourteen pieces, scattered over a massive maze...

BATTLETECH ● Infocom

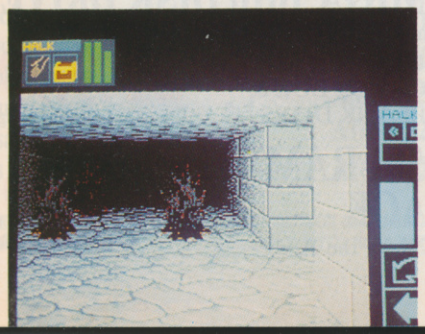
A new development from the Masters of Storytelling, *Battletech* has a fair share of arcade action. Not an adventure game, by any means...





WEC LE MANS ● Ocean

Vroom vroom! Any day now, *WEC Le Mans* should be zooming out of the programming pits and into the shops.



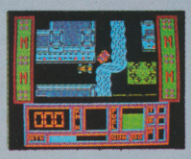
CHAOS STRIKES BACK ● Mirrorsoft

***Dungeon Master II* won't be around until the Autumn, but Amiga owners should soon be able to join in the fun. ST people can still keep ahead with *Chaos Strikes Back*, which adds an extra five levels to the original game and allows the player to edit the appearance of members of the exploring party.**

ACE ON THE ROAD

GREMLIN

Gremlin have just moved to plush new offices in Birmingham's Jewelry Quarter, so ploughing through the empty Chewits packets in the hallway, the ACE team descended for a fraternal visit. Work is still proceeding apace on *Ramrod* (mentioned last month) and before long we should be able to bring you further details. *Dark Fusion*, a shoot-em-up for the Spectrum and Commodore 64 should be ready in time for review next issue, and fast and furious action is promised, with three stages to each level. *FOFT*, or *Federation of Free Traders* to offer its full nomenclature, is on the starting blocks and should be lining up for review alongside *Dark Fusion*, and *Motor Massacre*, an arcade-style drivin' and killin' extravaganza...



Motor Massacre

Ultimate Darts and *Ultimate Golf* are both nearing completion on the ST, and from the look of the preview disks they give comprehensive coverage to the sports they simulate. *Darts* not only simulates play in a wide range of games, but also simulates players: it contains a database of classic 'finishes' from the oche, and in the final version the player will be able to ask the program to attempt three-dart finishes as used by famous players. *Golf*, on the other hand allows the human player to control the actions of the on-screen golfer in detail, as well as alter variables such as wind and weather.

ST– Adjusting the swing parameters in *Ultimate Golf* before playing a shot

ST – Fore!

Further details on *H.A.T.E. (Hostile All-Terrain Encounter)* and *Paranoia Complex* will appear on these pages as soon as Gremlin have tidied up the Chewits wrappers and settled properly into their new offices..

ST – will the third arrow land in that treble twenty bed? That's *Ultimate Darts*...

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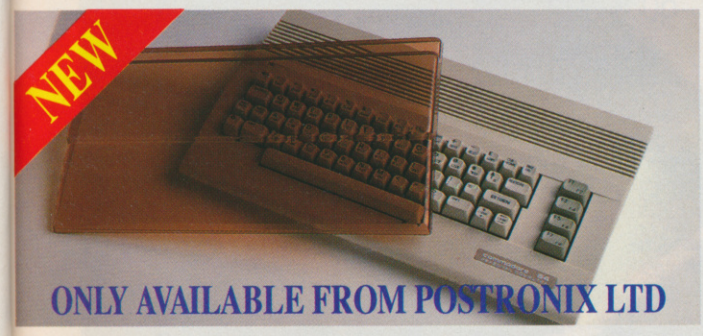

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THE FLYING SQU

Nancy at Chase HQ gives the low-down on the first suspect...

...then it's time to get moving.

CHASE HQ

TAITO 30p

American policemen are jumpiest round suspects' cars. They call it the Kill Zone. Tony Gibson and his partner Raymond Brody, who are attached to a unit of the Manhattan Police Department called Chase Special Investigation Headquarters, probably call it that too. But then they don't take risks.

For Tony and Ray, apprehending suspects involves ramming their cars with sufficient force to stop them. A mission starts with the partners cruising the city streets in an unmarked patrol car, waiting for the radio to burst into life as Nancy at Chase HQ gives the orders.

Then it's into the action. The player grips the steering wheel, slips into Lo gear, pushes the pedal to the floor and the chase is on. Like the majority of modern driving games, the view of the action is from just behind and slightly above the on-screen car. Other road users and roadside obstacles have to be avoided in pursuit of the quarry – collisions cost valuable time and cause loss of speed. A small distance indicator at the right-hand side of the screen reveals how close you are to the suspects, and Nancy also advises when visual contact should be possible. When the villains are sighted, a large arrow appears above their car and the time limit is extended.

Now comes the tricky bit. To stop the suspects, the player has to ram the suspects' car. Each collision causes damage – a meter running up the left-hand side of the screen indicates how many more times the car must be hit before it stops. On the higher levels, the criminals get cunning and start weaving in and out of the other traffic. You get cunning at times too, though – for example if the road splits, a large arrow appears on the screen showing the best way to go. Often this route winds over rough ground, or a part-built section of the highway, complete with wooden barricades and empty boxes.

The *Out Run* theme theme keeps being expanded and presented in different ways (see *Power Drift* in the ACE arcade special issue 16) and *Chase HQ* is the best so far. Driving and violence may not mix too well in real life, but it's a winning coin-op combination.

● Andy Smith

(Main picture) There he is! Note the increased time and damage meter on the left.
(Top) Smash into that car and force it to stop.
(Middle) Stage Three and it's drug pushers this time.
(Bottom) Hit the car on the outside of a bend and you're liable to go spinning off.

QUAD

EXTENDED PLAY...

CYBERBALL
ATARI 30p

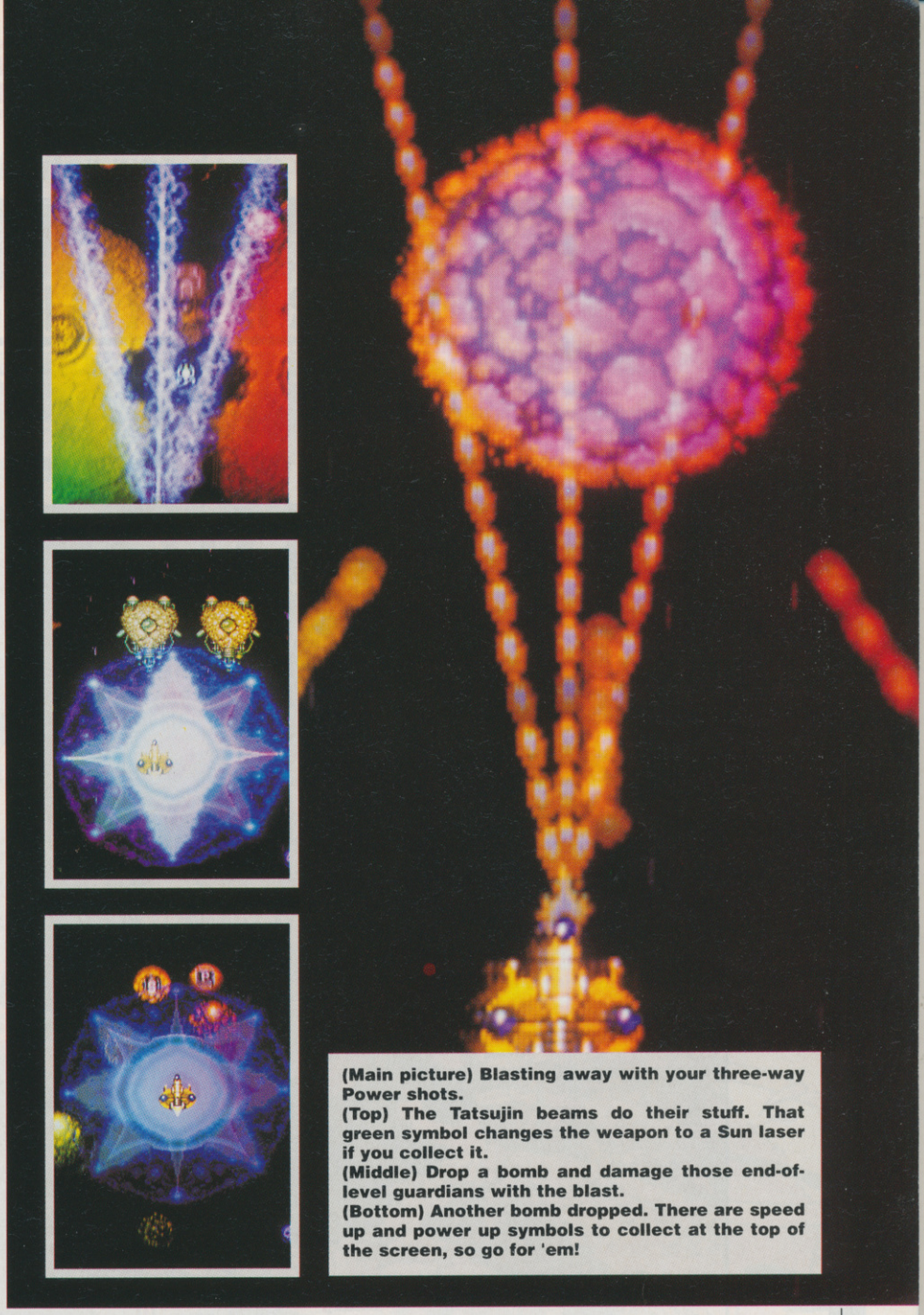
American football in the 21st century, played between two teams of player-controlled robots. Play follows the same rules as standard American football, and you call the plays, then control the specific robot that leads the play. For example, the attacking player decides to pass the ball up the field to another robot from the Down. Once the play starts the player controls the passer and when he throws the ball it travels towards the receiver. The control then switches to the receiver and the player must try to complete the pass and gain some extra yardage. An extra in the game that you tend not to find in real football is the exploding ball! As the game progresses, the ball heats up until it either explodes or crosses the other player's 50 yard or goal line. For hard-hitting action, this game is well worth checking out.

COBRA COMMAND
DATA EAST 30p

This horizontally-scrolling shoot-em-up, which puts you in the pilot seat of a helicopter, is another of the 26" monitor brigade. You've got flying and land-based nasties to contend with and some tricky tunnels to negotiate. All you would expect from a shoot-em-up is there: extra weapons, end-of-level guardians, good graphics and sound effects – and little long term interest.

HARD HEAD
SUNA 30p

Here's an arcade adventure very much in the *Super Mario Bros* mould. Cartoon-style sprites troll across brightly coloured platforms, smashing bricks and bouncing on baddies' heads. It's unoriginal but addictive fun.



(Main picture) Blasting away with your three-way Power shots.
(Top) The Tatsujin beams do their stuff. That green symbol changes the weapon to a Sun laser if you collect it.
(Middle) Drop a bomb and damage those end-of-level guardians with the blast.
(Bottom) Another bomb dropped. There are speed up and power up symbols to collect at the top of the screen, so go for 'em!

TRUXION
TAITO 30p

Among the games leading the 26" monitor revolution is this vertically-scrolling shoot-em-up from Taito. The player views his craft from directly above and has to fight through five increasingly difficult stages, killing airborne and stationary nasties and dealing with the end-of-level guardians. To help, you can pick up three different extra weapons. Play commences with 'Power shots', which are three-way-firing. 'Tatsujin beams' are electric arcs that leap from your craft and lock on to enemies for as long as you hold the fire button down or until the enemies are destroyed. The 'Sun laser' fires rapid laser bolts. Swapping between weapons is effected by shooting skull symbols and collecting the resultant coloured symbol. Red means Power shots, green is for Sun laser and blue is Tatsujin beam. After a few games you soon learn which of the extra weapons is best used against which end-of-level guardian.

As well as skull symbols, there are also bombs to collect, which can severely damage an end-of-level guardian if it gets caught in the blast, and 'S' symbols which speed up the ship. 'P' symbols, should you manage to collect five of them, increase fire power. For example, if you're using Power shots and manage to collect five 'P's the three shots are increased to nine; collect another five and the number goes up to 15. After losing a life, up to four 'P's can be carried over to the next ship.

Truxion is very *Xenon*-like, but then it's very like a lot of other shoot-em-ups. The large display is great – the feeling you get playing the game is like suddenly buying a new 22" telly when you've been watching a 14" model for years. It's a good shoot-em-up too, not as exciting as, say, *R-Type*, but a lot better than some of the others that have appeared in recent months. ● Andy Smith

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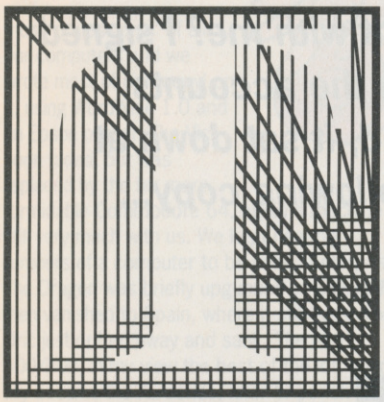

he Editor was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. Not, mind, as dead as a doornail, in the simile of our ancestors. Dead drunk.

"I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry," he had told the ragged staff when they invited him to join in the roistering at the nearest hostelry to the office. Scroungers! They'd be wanting Christmas bonuses next...

And yet here he was as inebriated as a salamander, courtesy of a bottle of Tanzanian sherry sent round by his long-suffering printer. Concentrating his vision wonderfully, the Editor surveyed his icy bed chamber. On the table sat his 12-year-old, free-with-Green-Shield-stamps Neanderthal 3 computer (3K, solar panel on the roof) and the only two pieces of software for which he had ever parted with money: 'Precis Plus,' which automatically halved the number of words in every feature submitted to him and saved fortunes on freelance linage payments; and 'Noughts and Crosses,' a Jung and Fulisch game which for some reason he had bought at a jumble sale for 65p.

"Games..." shrieked the Editor. "Computer games? Humbug...!" He wondered idly whether he could raise much on it third-hand.

These musings were interrupted by a low grinding, then a rattle, and finally by a clanking noise as if of the dragging of chains 'cross a wine merchant's cellar. Damn! He must have left the disk drive running again. But his colour changed as it came in through the door.....

"Tony Tyler!" gasped the Editor. "What do you want with me? I signed that 1978 expenses form last year. It must be lost in the accounts department..." But the shade said not a word. Instead, it sat down at the word processor and methodically keyed in the following copy...

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

The idea came to me one day in 1983 when I was standing looking into a shop window in London's Tottenham Court Road, and scratching myself. Inside, a row of computers were doing their thing, all plugged into TV screens and all running some sort of moving visual display. There was a Sinclair ZX81, a Commodore VIC 20, an elegant little box called a Dragon 32, a BBC computer, and an Atari 400 with its cash-till keyboard. I wanted them all. I couldn't afford even one.

However, a magazine dedicated to reviewing games and otherwise waffling about these wonderful widgets would certainly have an undeniable need for the lot. Plus a TV screen for each. All lined up on a long and well-lit workbench, while cool and dispassionate reviewers strolled from machine to machine, unpacking endless crates of free software, testing the latest input devices and other plug-in bits, and generally having a good time.

In the odd moments, one could also get a magazine out and maybe even cap the whole experience by acquiring some much-needed dosh.

First step, check out the rivals. Had anybody else got the same idea?

At the time there was only one magazine covering the designated base. (The same one that's still in business today.) I took my idea to the Godfathers of the nation's largest magazine publishing house. Moving with lightning speed, the Board took only eight months to agree. "One change," they said. "We want to call it Big K." My original title had been 48K, in those days the optimum RAMsize for home computers. (By the time of the launch, I expect we would have got around to calling it 64K – and then we'd have had to change it a year later to 128K...) Fearlessly evoking a supremely unmacho image of crackly wheaty things in china bowls with a lot of milk on top, Big K was launched.

By then there were five other games titles on the market – fifty-three computer magazines in all. Do you remember the Gold Rush? The days when dudes from all over scrambled to cash in on a new Klondike? In those days the city of Liverpool exuded a kind of post-Beatles glow, but all across the land folk were churning out stuff for Spectrum, Dragon, Beeb, VIC, Atari, Oric (do you remember the Oric-1?) and others, and getting themselves photographed in Ferraris while the blatts ran bemused news stories about overpaid whizz-kids.

It was soon apparent that the plethora of different machines was far more of a hassle than the luxury I had so insanely imagined. We had our row of computers and TVs, all right – with a nightmare of joysticks hanging upside down from birds'-nests of twisted cabling, coffee in the keyboards, TVs that wouldn't fire up, interfaces that wouldn't, plugs that didn't, switches that never had and, everywhere, cassette cases, some empty, some filled with anonymous white-labelled tapes, many clearly used as ashtrays or receptacles for nameless bodily excretions. For these, my friends, were the great days of The Games Listing. Games listings in BASIC! Some of you who remember the Boom may also have noticed that the tendency of games magazines then to fill up their pages with program listings has abated sharply in recent years. This isn't because the readers are fed up with them. It's because the magazines are fed up with them. Never (in my view) was there such a nightmare of an editorial task as sorting out the dozens of cassettes (no such thing as a disk then) that came in each post, trying to load them up (they wouldn't load), run them (how could we if they wouldn't load?), assess them (difficult when you can't run them), and – worst of all – print the buggers out.

There was no such thing as a standard office printer in those days – you had to blag a compatible printer for each of your computers (we had eight, and this blagging of printers was never actually completed), and even then half the time something wouldn't work.

Finally we were supposed to send the tapes back to their authors, but I'm afraid this task was considered of low priority, and one of these days some hapless cleaner in King's Reach Tower is going to open a long-disused cupboard and be buried under a mountain of nameless no-hoper cassettes.

Some of the computers we used then are still around today. Outright winner overall was the Spectrum. It was easily the most popular machine, even in its rubber-keyboard 48K version. The BBC also survived – it was by far the

most 'professional' of all our computers and we wrote most of our 'copy' on it, using WordWise 1.0 and an Epson printer. The Vic soon faded, but was replaced by the far more formidable Commodore 64, again a machine still very much with us. We kept hearing rumours of a computer to be called Enterprise. The Dragon was briefly upgunned to 64K RAM, then vanished to Spain, where it still lives. The Oric just drifted away and sank. The Atari 400/800, in my view the best of the lot, eventually became the XL series, later to perish in the sell-off from Warners to Jack Tramiel. Enterprise still didn't appear, but we heard it was now called Elan.

Then there was the software – excellent stuff like *Elite* for the Beeb, Chris Crawford games like the peerless *Eastern Front* for the Atari – a mound of stuff for both the C64 and the Spectrum, with the former winning on overall quality and the latter on sheer volume and inventiveness. This part of the original fantasy at least came true – it was really quite pleasant to lay down one's felt-tip, pour some coffee from the ever-bubbling pot, and move into the Review Room to pass an hour or two tackling some new mega-experience.

It wasn't complacency, more a kind of fatalism, since from the beginning it had been obvious that Big K was doing rather less well than we had hoped. Much of this was my fault. What I had really wanted was a sort of computer entertainment (rather than games alone) publication; what the publishers turned out to want was yet another games magazine, complete with listings in BASIC. We had a lot of fights over this question of BASIC listings. The publishers saw them as cheap pages; I saw them as an editorial nightmare. I lost. Few readers ever typed the damned things in, anyway, and those that did were usually underwhelmed by the boringness of the result (we wanted to print good games, but too often had to settle for something that would actually run).

We were getting better, bit by bit, but as the year of 1984 failed, the truth was that the Boom itself was beginning to peter out. Quite well-known companies suddenly were...no more. The Liverpool thing collapsed. Mags folded. Christmas 1984 failed to produce the predicted boom, and by early in '85 it was clear that the moment of crisis was at hand. For all of us.

In February the managers pulled the rug from under Big K. We had lasted thirteen months, and had paid our own way, but we had not made enough profit, and it was their opinion that we would never do so. Curtains. Sadly, I went back and told the staff of five the news. Without a word the Reviews Editor walked over to one of the better machines and started unplugging it. "Right," he said. "I'm having this one." The looting continued all that week and by the time we had finished all that was left was the Vic 20 which for eight months had been holding up one leg of the table where we kept our coffee machine.

The day we left the building the Enterprise/Elan, now called Flan, was actually launched on the other side of London. I never heard of it again.

"Humbug," spluttered the Editor apoplectically, "Utter bloody Activision...". But even as he spoke the spirit faded, only to be replaced by an even more ghastly sight. The apparition staggered from an excess of cold medication. Its pockets spewed jammie dodgers, clearly long past their sell-by date .

"My God," stammered the long-pocketed journo, "Andy Wilton! But I've told you six times already this week, the cheque's in the post. First class – at least I assume 7p still goes first class. I'll bet those thieving devils at Mount Pleasant have been opening the envelopes again..."

You just wo
what they're s

Thunder

"Plays just like its coin-op parent."
The One.

"Prepare for take off in December and look for this High Flyer shooting straight for the top."
Your Commodore Games Special

"The conversion is EXCELLENT"
"The graphics are fast and IMPRESSIVE."
"Bags of entertainment blasting through the stages."
ACE Magazine
Christmas '88
Special issue

"I can finally see what all the fuss was about. Thunder Blade isn't just impressive technically, in the playability stakes it's tremendously addictive."
"A must for the arcade machine lovers."
Crash Smash 91%

"With tanks, aircraft and lots of generally offensive beggars hanging around everywhere, the whole game becomes a myriad of fast paced-action and lots of good graphics."
"All the great arcade action has been left intact."
ST & Amiga Format 92%

"Thunder Blade is the sort of game its fans will love – by which I mean that those who thrill to 8-bit conversions of coin-op arcade games will need no further recommendation."
Amstrad Action

"The HOTTEST conversion this Xmas by far." C.C.I.

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"Mega game." C.C.I.

"An ESSENTIAL addition to every '64 and Amiga owning blast 'em up fans software library."
Commodore User.

"Each time US Gold produce a coin-op conversion, they set a new standard of excellence which makes life a little more difficult for other software developers. Thunder Blade has established our faith in coversions for the ST. As we have come to expect from the pride of Birmingham, this is a faithful reproduction of the arcade version – explosive and brutally competitive!"
ST Action – February 1989.

ACE RATING

Spectrum Version
Thunder Blade 793
Afterburner 656

CBM 64/128 Version
ThunderBlade 800
Afterburner 519

"Thunder Blade is 100% FABULOUS."
Amstrad Cent Pourcent Magazine

"US Gold has done an excellent job – watch out for it!" Sinclair User

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Thunder Blade goes platinum and sells over 100,000 units in Europe in just 5 days!

"The Spectrum version is superb – there is definitely no choice when considering this or Af...b...er – we'd go for Thunder Blade every time."
New Computer Express

t! Play it! The No1!...

...but once again, before the Editor could even think of trotting out his world famous 'I'll have it cancelled and draw you a postal order straight after the New Year holiday' excuse, the transparent apparition sat at the eerily glowing screen and keyed in...

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Are you starting to find the whole world of computer games a bit dull, a bit short on excitement? Do you long for those days when glossy games adverts were a brand new idea, umpteen different companies were building their own micros, and everyone held their breath for the next Ultimate release? You must be suffering from the dreaded micro doldrums, an affliction that's increasingly common these days.

It's all got too predictable, you see. If you had to guess which games were going to be big this Xmas, or which micros were going to be in the shops next Xmas, you could probably get pretty close without any inside information at all. It's not just that things are announced, advertised and written about a long way in advance: that's been a feature of the micro scene for years. No, what's different now is the way games actually come out within a few months of when they're supposed to, look roughly like you'd expect them to from the ad artwork and correspond fairly well with their write-ups.

We're talking about business here. What started out as a crazy, amateurish affair run from programmers' bedrooms has turned into a serious industry. Businessmen don't produce no-hope home micros using unknown chips and bugged ROMs. Businessmen don't advertise unreleased games for a year and then scrap them. Businessmen know there's no percentage in that kind of thing: after all, they've got years of other people's mistakes to learn from.

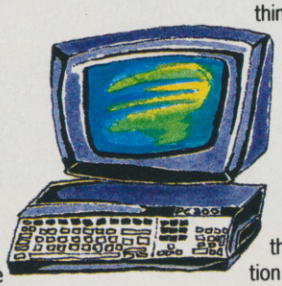
Really it's just a sign that the micro gold-rush is over. Back in 1982 the micro scene was the hottest thing going as far as City experts were concerned, and silicon investments were much sought after. The disastrous Xmas of 1985-6 finished that off, with poor sales killing MSX at birth and breaking Acorn as a mass producer. The micro depression that followed was as unrealistically gloomy as the boom had been optimistic. Even Amstrad shares fell on the basis of their fledgling micro division, and pundits predicted the end of the home computer industry altogether.

Needless to say, the pundits had misread the signs. Acorn's failure was an indication not that people were tired of micros, but that Acorn were selling the wrong machine at the wrong price. As Amstrad's meteoric rise over the following year so clearly showed, there were still plenty of willing buyers around if the deal on offer was good enough. The Amstrad CPC was good value, the Acorn Electron wasn't, and that was the only difference that mattered.

If anything, this simple truth was harder to cope with than the apocalyptic visions of a total micro collapse: at least that would have been exciting and heroic, rather than just plain old business sense.

NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD

How can it be a bad thing that the computer entertainment industry has grown up? If impractical enthusiasts and software cowboys fall by the wayside, that oughtn't to get anyone depressed. Programmers making a decent living, software houses putting the emphasis on solid gameplay – surely this kind of thing is good news?



And that, perhaps, is the problem: almost by definition, good news is boring. Computers and computer games may be a whole lot more exciting than they used to be, but behind the scenes it's dull as anything. Whatever happened to the wild rocket-scientist imagination of Sir Clive Sinclair? Alan Sugar may be a great deal more successful than Uncle Clive, but he's not half so amusing.

ROCKET SCIENTISTS

The more things change, folks, the more they stay the same. Fans of the weird and wonderful may long for those far-off days of the Sinclair QL and the COMX, but even at this end of the decade there are still a few exotic animals around. Don't look to Sir Clive Sinclair to produce them – he's busy turning out highly sensible laptops – but rather turn your attention to the new generation of lovable boffins.

At the worthy end of things there's Miles Gordon Technology, with their oh-so-brave micro for Africa (not to mention the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent and a few other places too.) Based on the little used Z80B microprocessor, it might be unkindly described as a Spectrum with go-very-slightly-faster stripes. In fact it has a far better Basic than any of Uncle Clive's ZX beasties could boast, oodles more memory and substantially better graphics. Unfortunately it's the machine's Spectrum compatibility that everyone's latched onto, and in 1988 that's not necessarily a blessing.

The same could be said of the new Sinclair Professional PC200, whose four-colour CGA graphics make it look like a backward step from the 1984-vintage Amstrad CPC. It's obvious 'everyone knows' points like this that earn Fido awards once the dust settles. (The way that you can't close the PC200's case properly after installing expansion boards may also give us a few chuckles in years to come.)

Let's not forget the Acorn Archimedes either. How remarkable it is that such a modern machine should in so many ways be a real blast from the past. Like the old 8-bit BBC Micro it's all but perfect, a sleek machine with impressive power for its time and some heavyweight official patronage. Also like the BBC it's a rather purposeless beast, too expensive for home use and a sight more powerful than is needed for the educational market. Using an Archie in the classroom has been tellingly compared to nipping down to the cornershop in a Ferrari, but that's almost beside the point: as another commentator observed, "Calling a micro 'educational' means you really don't know what use the thing is."

LETS GET EXCITED

Okay, Ultimate aren't about to come out with their next Earth-shattering epic, but there are still plenty of creative people worth keeping an eye on. However technically jaded you might be, you can't help being impressed by the technical skill, originality and finely-honed gameplay these guys can produce.

Take Incentive for instance, the people who brought you *Driller* and *Darkside*. Their astonishingly thorough 'Freescape' system has just hit the streets again in the form of the new game *Total Eclipse*. Just imagine what they could turn out if they designed for the ST and Amiga from the outset!

Of course, we've already seen what happens when John Phillips starts out on 16-bit

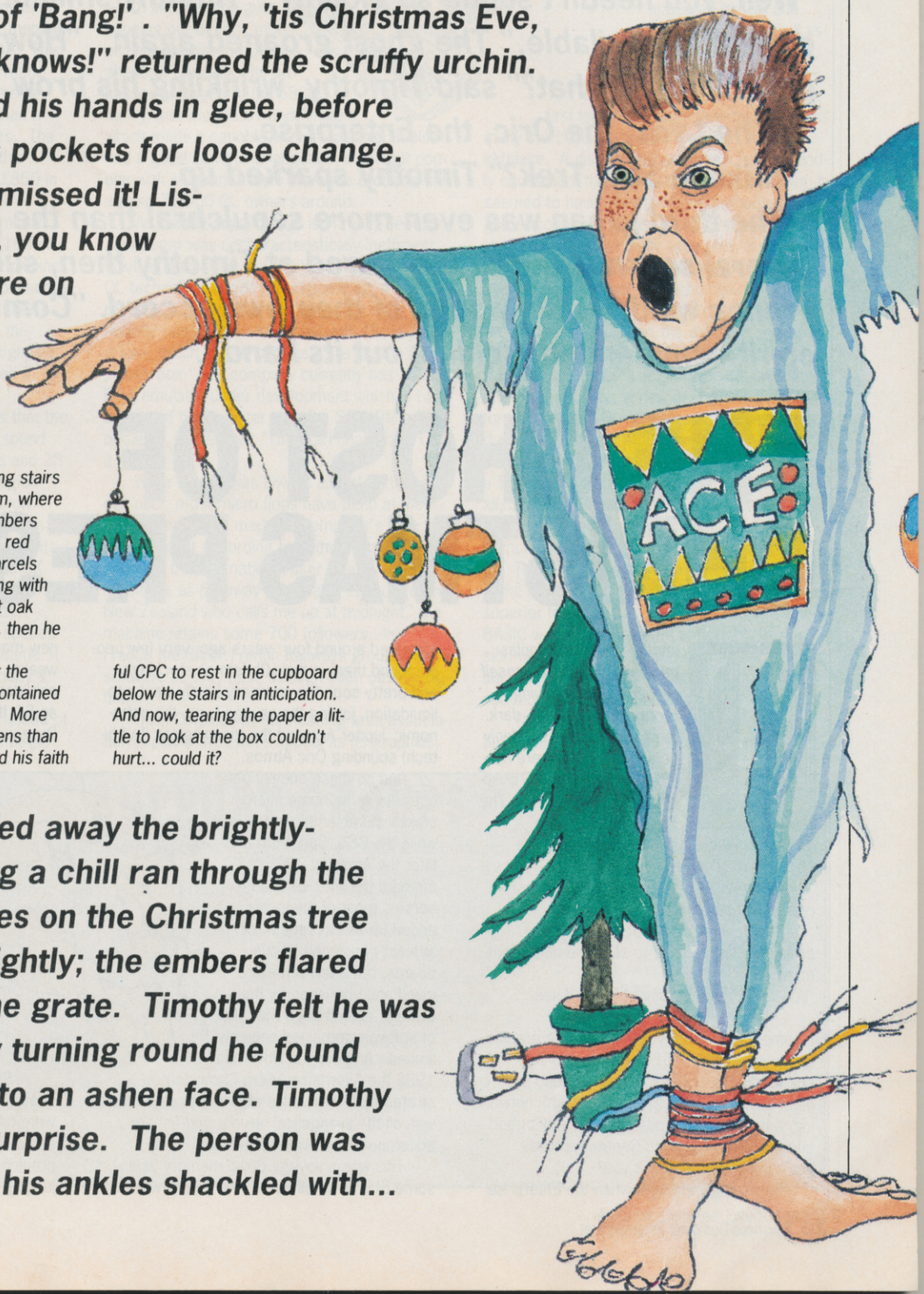
machines: *Eliminator*, that's what. Here at ACE we don't rate this clever drive/shoot-em-up quite as highly as we do his earlier *Nebulus*, but that's hardly surprising. Both games got an ACE 900-rating, as John's striking 1986 debut *Impossaball* might well have done if ACE had been around back then. With this record, his next game must be worth looking forward to.

The same very definitely goes for David Braben. This is partly because David's right on the cutting edge of solid 3D game graphics, as his excellent shoot-em-up *Virus* so ably proved, but mostly because he's working on *Elite II*. If the original *Elite* can still give a good account of itself after all these years the sequel should be something truly remarkable.

There are plenty of other old-timers still delivering the goods. Realtime's impressive *Carrier Command* immediately springs to mind, but let's not forget Digital Integration: 900-rated belters *Bobsleigh* and *ATF* showed they hadn't lost their touch, and with *F-16 Combat Pilot* on the horizon they're clearly a team to watch.

1989 is set to be a good games vintage.

For the first time in his life, the Editor felt a pang of conscience seeping into his sodden brain. Desperately, he rushed to the window, threw it open and peered into the morning mist. "What's today?" he shrieked anxiously at the paperboy delivering his November issue of 'Bang!' . "Why, 'tis Christmas Eve, Sir, as everyone knows!" returned the scruffy urchin. The Editor rubbed his hands in glee, before rummaging in his pockets for loose change. "Ha ha! I haven't missed it! Listen, young fellow, you know the computer store on the corner..."



It was the night before Christmas. Tiny Timothy crept down the creaking stairs to the living room, where the last dying embers of the fire cast a red glow over the parcels piled high beneath the tree. Trembling with anticipation he pushed shut the great oak door, praying that it would not creak, then he padded over to the presents.

With shaky hands he reached for the largest box of all, the one he knew contained the ST. 'State of the art computing.' More zaps, more pings, more colourful aliens than ever before. Earlier that day he'd laid his faithful CPC to rest in the cupboard below the stairs in anticipation. And now, tearing the paper a little to look at the box couldn't hurt... could it?

As he gently peeled away the brightly-coloured wrapping a chill ran through the room. The baubles on the Christmas tree jingled ever so slightly; the embers flared momentarily in the grate. Timothy felt he was not alone. Slowly turning round he found himself staring into an ashen face. Timothy jumped up with surprise. The person was dressed in white, his ankles shackled with...

...could they really be old Spectrum power supplies? And were those loading leads that framed his face like straggly hair? The strangest thing of all was that if he squinted, Timothy imagined he could see right through the figure.

" Who are you?" Timothy managed to utter. The figure replied in sepulchral tones; "I am the ghost of Christmas Presents Past. Call me Gwyn Hughes. What have you there?"

"An S-S-ST..." Timothy stuttered. The ghost let out a low moan. "Well, you needn't sound so gloomy," Timothy smiled. "This is the best computer available." The ghost groaned again. "How soon they forget." "Forget what?" said Timothy, wrinkling his brow.

"The Lynx, the Oric, the Enterprise..."

"Like in Star Trek?" Timothy sparked up.

The third groan was even more sepulchral than the previous two. For several seconds the wraith stared at Timothy then, suddenly, the French windows blew open of their own accord. "Come with me," the spirit commanded, holding out its hand...

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

Timothy took the ectoplasmic palm and found himself carried out of the living room, into the damp, dark, back garden, and suddenly he and the ghost were flying through the deep, crisp blackness. "It's just like The Snowman," Timothy laughed. "Where are you taking me? The North Pole? The Kalahari Desert?

"Aston Villa Leisure Centre," the ghost replied without emotion.

"Aston Villa Leisure Centre!" Timothy exclaimed, hardly able to stifle the disappointment.

"You'll see," said the ghost. "You'll see..."

If somebody offered you a micro with graphic resolution of 672 x 512 pixels and a 256 colour palette, four-voice stereo sound over eight octaves, 128K expandable RAM, networking, a built-in word processor and looks good enough to get it Design Centre approval you'd jump at it, wouldn't you?

Surprisingly enough, when the Enterprise appeared around four years ago, very few people found them in their Christmas stockings and pretty soon the company boldly went into liquidation, joining the savage Lynx, the astronomic Jupiter Ace and the meaningless (but hi-tech) sounding Oric Atmos.

And so these once-hopeful entrants in the home micro stakes stumbled along the way while the C64, Spectrum and later the Amstrad CPC crossed the line. Like lame horses, most of the losers ended up as cat's meat, or at least consigned to cupboards, but a few remained loved and cherished by their owners, even though their diet of software remained severely limited. And early in November 1988 the Alternative Micro Show demonstrated that there is life after death – complete with all the evangelical fervour that usually accompanies revivalist meetings.

This was a voyage down memory lane – some of it as small as 1K – to an era when a new machine seemed to appear every two weeks. It may seem strange today, when the only decision is choosing between an Amiga or an ST, that some people really did buy the Dragon 32.

Actually there was a scarcity of Dragons at the show, and not because of a preponderance of sword-wielding princes. The Dragon users are a proud bunch, who were holding their own gathering a fortnight later. But if mythology was missing, the true genius of Einstein was everywhere – primarily because the show's organisers are Emsoft, the Tatung machine's user group.

Graham Bettany and Mike Smallman have been arranging Einstein shows for some time, but attendance figures were falling. Perhaps getting together with some other minority micros would solve the problem? The ploy seems to have worked, judging by the enthusiastic crowd.

The Einstein is still fairly well known, thanks to Dixons, which sold off the two-disk machine at amazingly low prices. David Bell of B&H Computers, which has taken over publication of the Einstein User magazine, has a database of approximately 13,500 users and, as he points out, probably only 50% of owners bothered to register.

The CP/M compatible machine seems especially suited to the technically minded. Bob Smith of Avon Einstein User Group says that Bristol Polytechnic uses Einsteins to train computer engineers. The tutor puts a fault in the machine and the students have to repair it. Synclavia Software has even produced a MIDI interface for the machine – and promises that finished versions won't be housed in cardboard boxes like the prototype!

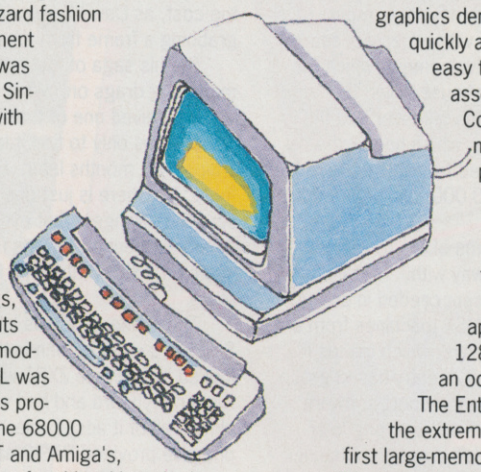
You could have encountered an Einstein in your high street, but you'll need a long memory to recall the Texas Instruments TI-99/4A. This low-profile, silver and black micro was made distinctive by the huge indent next to the keyboard, which resembled nothing less than a driveway beside a house, for cartridges. The machine was powerful and popular in the States, but an original selling price of £850 in 1981 rather restricted sales!

Those who could afford that phenomenal price, or bought in after reductions to £150 or even £89, seem to have stuck by their machines – perhaps because they were buying a phenomenal micro. The TI-99/4A (catchy name, huh?) was actually a 16-bit machine based on the 99000 processor. While few users recognised this fact, they all realised that you needed a BASIC cartridge to do much with it.

But TI disciple Francis Parrish says that the machines are reliable and boast good sound and graphics with three audio channels and 28 sprites. Mark Playle of East Anglian Region 99'ers (they probably sound like a gridiron team because of the number of US airbases in the area) says that enthusiasts like to add bits on to their systems. Peter Walker of the UK Users Group demonstrated this with a joystick-controlled robot which uses the cassette recorder control port and a very good speech synthesiser. But so it should be – the same TI sound chips are still used in many of today's top micros.

Speaking of machines which were ahead of their time, there's a small QL presence at the show, though like Dragon tamers the QL fans tend to stick to their own Sinclair gatherings. The ebullient Freddy Vachha of Digital Precision isn't afraid to hold forth on why the Quantum Leap belly flopped soon after take off.

"It suffered from being produced in an erratic and haphazard fashion with no real development schedule." And why was that? "Because Clive Sinclair was obsessed with the idea of providing truck drivers with something to crush." We'll be featuring the C5 in our Alternative Motor Show issue.



Despite its failings, which included the guts hanging out of early models in a dongle, the QL was ahead of the pack. Its processor belonged to the 68000 family, just like the ST and Amiga's, which made it capable of multi-tasking. It also had a good command language, making it popular with programmers. There are probably still around 75,000 QL owners around.

As Freddy says, the QL isn't really dead. Alan Sugar was uncharacteristically inefficient in killing it when he bought Sir Clive's name and QL technology keeps on reappearing, most recently in the form of the Thor – though nobody seems keen to persist with Microdrives, which Freddy defines as "a knot in a plastic box." His company currently has an MS-DOS emulator under development which is two and a half times faster than the ST's IBM mimic because, as he says, "The Atari chaps didn't do it right."

While the QL was always aimed at the serious user, most micro flops have been at the leisure end of the market. Camputer's Lynx is still a wildcat according to enthusiasts like Bob Jones of the international user group. With members as far away as "One lonely bugger in New Zealand who calls me up at midnight," the machine retains some 700 followers. In France the SNCF French Railways group swop software as they pass through each other's stations.

Colin Clayman of the Reading area association explains the Lynx's appeal as its graphics, which beat all the competition when it appeared in 1982, and the fact that it's a good machine for software development. Ironically, not enough authors discovered this, and lack of software support coupled with bad marketing killed the machine. Even today a BASIC graphics demonstration runs so quickly and smoothly that it's easy to believe Bob Jones' assertion that a Popular Computing Weekly journalist, on seeing the program at the 1984 PCW show, refused to believe that it wasn't a video tape until he saw the code listed.

The Lynx appeared in 48K and 128K versions, as well as an odd 96K halfway house. The Enterprise only went for the extremes, but was one of the first large-memory home micros, which many still believe should have upset the marketplace. A distinctive-looking machine, unkindly christened 'the plastic cowpat' by one wag, it seemed to have everything the computer gamer could want when it was first announced. Unluckily when it actually appeared, a year and a half later, the hardware boom was almost over as people made their choices.

Despite attempts by Enterprise's own software division to support the machine, including an unreleased version of Jon Ritman's classic, *Batman*, Enterprise went into liquidation. Now, after a brief hiatus, a new user group has been formed and Tim Box, who has already produced an excellent mouse-driven graphics package for the machine, is close to perfecting a Spectrum emulator which runs most, if not all, Sinclair software (rather like recent Spectrums). He demonstrated Virgin's *Dan Dare*, complete with Speccy attribute clash.

The Oric should also have carved a place in the market. Its sound and graphics were far superior to the Spectrum's and in an age when BASIC was still considered important, its version was fast and structured with neat touches such as dedicated game sound commands to summon up a Zap instantaneously.

There was no Oric user group at the show but there was Home and General Computing,

SUPPORT GROUPS

The following list of contacts is far from comprehensive, but it provides a method of getting in touch with supporters of all the machines mentioned. The groups or companies can't necessarily supply new or second hand hardware/software. Please enclose an sae with any enquiries.

Alternative Micro Show (Organisers) Emsoft Ltd, Poplar Lane, Copdock, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 0AB (0473) 690729

Tatung Einstein: B&H Computers, Bank Top Works, Southowram, Halifax HX3 9NJ (0422) 52905
Synclavia Software, 17 Manor Close, Abbots Ann, Andover, Hampshire SP11 7BJ

Jupiter Ace: Jupiter Ace User Group, 17 Spring Wood Close, Dunston, Chesterfield S41 8BS (0246) 237555

Enterprise: International Enterprise Users Group, 60 Holdenhurst Ave, Finchley, London N12 0HX

TI-99/4A: Parco Electronics, Weston, Honiton, Devon EX14 0PE (0404) 44425
TI-99/4A Users Group, 24 Bacons Drive, Cuffley, Herts EN6 4DU (0707) 873778
East Anglia Region 99'ers User's Group, 13 Elm Walk, Lakenheath, Suffolk IP27 9QR (063881) 3457

Lynx: Lynx User Group, 39 Ashton Close, Needingworth, St Ives, Cambs.
Reading Lynx User Group, 14 Compton Close, Reading

Oric: Home & General Computing, 8 Staley Hall Road, Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 3DT 061-303 7369

QL: Digital Precision, 222 The Avenue, London E4 9SE 01-527 5493
Quanta, 24 Oxford Street, Stony Stratford, MK11 1JU
QL Super User Bureau, PO Box 3, Shildon, DL4 2LW

MSX: MSX Central , 14 The Wardens Ave, Allesley Village, Coventry CV5 9GJ

which holds vast stocks of Oric software and can still supply peripherals, such as a third-party disc drive. Allan Whitaker explained that the Oric 1 was killed by a bug-laden ROM, not uncommon in those micro goldrush days. The Oric's reputation suffered more than most though and this, coupled with excessive secrecy regarding software development, which the company tried to keep in-house, killed the machine. Despite a French takeover and the appearance of the Atmos, which had all the bugs corrected and looked tres chic in its red and black case, only 300,000 machines were sold worldwide.

These were the victims of the format wars which MSX tried to do away with. The Japanese 'standard' only succeeded in so far as there are now 'dead' MSX machines from a wide range of manufacturers, which makes it viable for MSX Central, a Coventry-based group with worldwide members, to import software from Japan where there is still a strong user base. In fact you only need cross the Channel to discover MSX2 in action – the Spanish use it in schools like we do the BBC.

Probably the most interesting thing about MSX remains the machines' unique features. Faced with producing micros with roughly the same specifications, major electronics manufacturers such as Toshiba, Sanyo and Philips developed special abilities such as music or video systems. If you can't afford an Amiga and *Genlock* you can still have a lot of fun with an MSX machine, picked up for a fraction of the cost, as David Krawczyk demonstrated, grabbing a frame from a video camera.

So this saga of lost opportunities and bad marketing drags on. What a disappointment if you'd received one of these machines from Santa Claus only to find it lacking any form of support six months later. Enough examples then? No, there is just one more machine, possibly the strangest that ever existed, that deserves mention. It was finally located, sitting alone on a small table in a far corner of the room.

The Jupiter Ace was intended to challenge Sir Clive's empire, then in the ascendant. It looked like a white ZX81 with a Spectrum-style rubber keyboard and had a full 1K of RAM, almost all of it accessible. But whereas everyone else provided BASIC as their on-board language (so that kids around Christmas could blackmail their parents with tales of 'computer literacy') the designers of the Ace knew better. They went Forth and almost inevitably failed to multiply.

Today the machine has virtually no software, limiting its appeal to devotees of its powerful but difficult language, and there isn't even a proper user group, which is why John Charter was sitting patiently with his prized machine, hoping to find fellow Jupiter aces. And though he was hardly swamped by punters, there was a steady trickle, including one man who had travelled all the way from London to see if there was still life in the machine he had bought at a jumble sale.

Yes there was. As show organiser Graham Bettany said, old computers never really die. People tend to fall in love with their first machines and there will always be support for them, on however small a scale. Which is why this year's show is intended to move to a bigger venue, in Stafford's Bingley Hall, and will run for two days over the weekend of the 11th and 12th November, 1989.

Tiny Timothy blinked as he opened his eyes. The Christmas morning sun streamed in through the window and upstairs he could hear his parents stirring. He had fallen asleep with his head resting against the box containing the ST. "The state of the art," he thought. "Better colours, better sound... but what about better marketing? Isn't that what really counts? And in ten year's time...? I'd better book my table at the Alternative Micro Show for 1998," he concluded. "Otherwise they'll all be taken up by Archimedes and Sinclair PC200 owners."

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Mark and Dominic, the Domarks, are sad to be losing the coin-op they used for reference when the first Star Wars game was being programmed, but the trilogy of *Star Wars* games-of-the-films is now complete (until Lucasfilm starts making some more of the promised nine films in the series, anyway). They have just moved offices and splashed out on a cockpit version of the Star Wars arcade machine, and there's not room for TWO coin-ops in chateau Domark, so it has to be goodbye to the Star Wars machine... Soon it will be a lucky ACE reader's turn to stay up late at night in front of a Star Wars arcade game set to permanent free play.

Apart from the main prize, which is worth hundreds and hundreds of pounds, three runner-up prizes are on offer in this Domark Star Wars trivia quiz – sets of the trilogy of films, Star Wars, Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi. And then there are no less than 100 consolation prizes – a hundred assorted *Star Wars*, *Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi* posters are waiting to be despatched.

To enter, all you have to do is have a bash at answering the five Star Wars questions that appear on the coupon. If you get stuck on one of them (which shouldn't be the case if you are a real Star Wars fan) don't worry – enter anyway, as you still stand a good chance of collecting a prize. If you have got a problem with a Domark game – like being stuck on a level, or having loading difficulties, then there's a new Hotline telephone number to use: 01 780 2224. Don't go ringing that number and asking the answers to the questions, mind...

Complete the coupon and pop it in the post to us at ACE STAR WARS COMPETITION, 4 Queen Street, Bath, BA1 1EJ to arrive by 5th January 1989.

WIN

ENTRY FORM

1) Who played Luke Skywalker?

.....

2) What is the name of the spacecraft that you pilot in *Star Wars*, the computer game?

.....

3) What role did Peter Cushing play in Star Wars?

.....

4) Who programmed the home computer version of *Star Wars* for Domark?

.....

5) What was the name of Princess Leia's planet that was destroyed by the Death Star?

.....

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TEL NO .....**AGE**.....

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SCREEN TEST

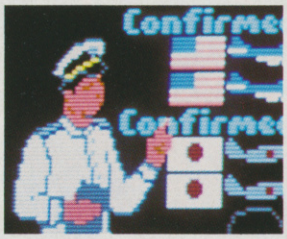
After two spondiciously gigantic Screen Tests, this time we've plumped for a small but perfectly-formed one. How so perfectly-formed? Well, bursting forth in glorious ACE colour are some glorious games – and we've devoted more space to each one.

Leading the way is a three-page special on WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH, which re-creates the whole of the Lord of the Rings trilogy. It's an epic fantasy/strategy/wargame designed by Mike Singleton and you don't need to be a Tolkien fan to get plenty out of it.

Lucasfilm Games are exploding back on the scene with BATTLEHAWKS. An air combat game set in the Pacific during World War II, it too gets the full treatment on three stunning pages.

What's the best thing to come out of France since Brigitte Bardot? PURPLE SATURN DAY, that's what. A game that exhibits the best in graphics and artwork, but has all the right stuff in the gameplay department too.

If you're hungry for home-grown product then roll on over to the INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE. It will test your skills to the limit in a tortuous landscape of futuristic puzzle nightmares.



Perfectly-formed games deserve perfectly-formed reviews – so here they are...

THE RATINGS

HOW THEY'RE CALCULATED...
If you buy a game, how much enjoyment will you get out of it, and for how long? Just check out our revolutionary PIC (Predicted Interest Curve) for the full story. Brilliant arcade games start high on the curve, and then steadily tail off as you lose interest; powerful puzzle games may ride the crest of the curve for months – but the moment you solve them they'll come tumbling down; complex strategy games may stump you at first – but climb up the scale as you begin to appreciate the scope of the gameplay. And as for the turkeys – they start low, stay low, and have nowhere to go but down, down, down.

Once you've seen how long the game can hold your attention, all you need to glance at is the renowned ACE RATING. This is calculated according to the area under the PIC. The bigger it is, the better the game. Add to that our definitive ratings for IQ Factor (will it give your brain cells a work-out?) and Fun Factor – a measure of instant appeal and exhilaration as you dive into the game. Then there's the ARCADE ACCURACY rating, used where appropriate, to report on how good a job the programmers have done with the conversion job on a game that began life in the coin-op arcade. Of course, we rate the Graphics and Audio effects too...for EVERY machine the game's available on, giving the full picture, no matter which machine you own

WHY YOU CAN RELY ON THEM...
The ACE reviewing team covers a broad spectrum of computer entertainment talent. Andy Wilton – now moved on to be permanent technical wizz on our sister magazine PC Plus – is as handy with a smart bomb as he is with hexadecimal. Andy Smith wouldn't know hexadecimal from a hole in the ground, but can wipe the floor with any number of aliens. Bob Wade (ex-Personal Computer Games, Zzap!64 and Amstrad Action) has played more computer games than any sane person ought to. Add Steve Cooke (ex-PCG and formerly columnist for magazines ranging from Zzap!64 to Your Sinclair) and count in our new Editor, Graeme Kidd, who has over five years' worth of professional gameplaying under his ample belt, and you've got age and experience as well as youthful enthusiasm.

Every game on the following pages has been seen by all of us. We compare notes, express differing opinions, and only then do we decide who's to take final responsibility for getting our views into print. What follows, then, isn't just a collection of casual comments, but the definitive ACE verdict on this month's software. We've checked it out – now you can too.

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SCREENTEST SUPPLEMENT

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Two pages packed with as many updates as we could find for YOUR machine.

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Round-up of the latest in budget games.

TRICKS 'N' TACTICS.....77
All the best tips for beating all the best games.

The first stage in finding out what's happening – accessing the status icon on the Full Map Level.

- Clicking on the Eye allows you to gaze into Galadriel's Mirror, the magic pool in Lorien. Which is Middle-Earthspeak for calling up status information.
- The Scroll icon allows the current game to be saved, or a saved game to be restored. Only one game position can be saved at a time – saving the current position destroys a previously-saved game.
- Click on the Magnifying Glass icon, and the pointing finger cursor becomes a magnifying glass which can be moved over the map; clicking again when it is in position changes the display to the Campaign Level, revealing a section of the more detailed map.
- Selecting the Hourglass icon calls up a window which allows the passage of gametime to be tinkered with – Normal, Hasty and Very Hasty settings are available.

Select the Magnifying Glass icon on the Full Map, move the glass over Mount Doom and click again, and you are transferred to this section of the Campaign Map, which shows Sauron's HQ and its immediate vicinity.

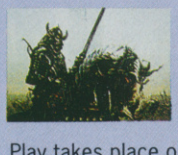
- Allows the health and morale of parties allied to the cause of Good to be examined. To identify locations, armies or characters on the map, move the blue finger to the appropriate place and click to reveal what is there.
- Changes the cursor, and allows it to be used to access the Animation Level at a chosen location.
- Calls up the Full Map Level display.
- Alters the speed of gametime.
- Used to deploy forces. Click here, and the cursor changes to a red arrow. Place it over the force you want to move, and click again – the word 'TO' appears next to the arrow cursor. Move the 'TO' cursor over the scrolling map until the desired destination is reached, and then click again. The force just commanded then starts to make its way to the destination you have chosen.

Select the Magnifying Glass icon on the Campaign Map, move the glass over Mount Doom (where there's also an icon representing an army of Orcs), click again, and you are transferred to the Animation Level. Mount Doom is shown in the background, and as you simply can't cram 2,000 Orcs onto a computer screen, the bad guys are represented by a small army...

- Clicking on the Eye on this level gives the status of characters on screen – normally the leader of a party is examined, but you can click on individuals in a group. Once again, no intelligence about the well-being of Sauron's allies can be gained by using the Mirror of Galadriel.
- The Map icon gives access to the Campaign Level
- The Provisions icon allows an active member of a party to pick up, put down or use objects. If nothing is present in the location for the character to pick up, you are told as much, otherwise a supplementary window opens giving the choice of objects which can be manipulated.

(Right) One location contains a rope and an elven cloak...

A TOURIST'S GUIDE



Or how to find your way around and get things done on the quest to destroy The One Ring

Play takes place on three levels: Full Map, Campaign and Animation – a pointing finger is used in conjunction with icons to transfer between levels and make selections. Players allergic to mice or joysticks can use single key commands to access most of the options.

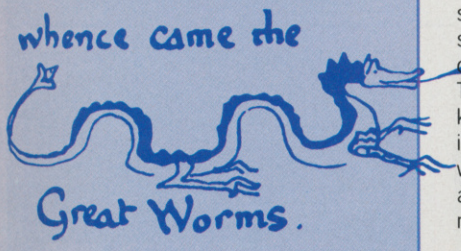
As might be expected, the Full Map level offers an overall view of Middle Earth, representing the general geography of the land. Forces allied to Evil appear as small red squares, while the guys on your side are shown as powder blue pixels – the blue dots flash if the forces they represent are in the frame of mind to obey your orders.

At Campaign Level, the screen acts as a window, revealing a portion of a huge scrolling map of Middle Earth. The geography is shown in more detail, and icons on the map show the position of individuals or armies. Once again, the icons that represent forces happy to accept your commands blink on and off, and as forces or characters move, their associated icons travel across the map. A readout at the foot of the screen constantly updates the time and date in Middle Earth.

WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH

MELBOURNE HOUSE go Tolkien crazy

(Above) The full map of Middle Earth, which gives an overall picture of what is happening. The game is automatically paused while this screen is showing.



SINGING about gold has nothing to do with it. This is much more than a sequel to Melbourne House's classic adventure of yesteryear – *The Hobbit*.

War In Middle Earth combines elements of strategy/wargaming with adventuring in a massive game the sheer size of which makes demands on the player. You don't have to be a Tolkien fan to appreciate it, but an in-depth knowledge of the events and terrain portrayed in Lord of The Rings certainly comes in handy when settling down in front of the computer and attempting to get The One Ring into the middle of Sauron's lair.

The action begins at the start of the Lord of The Rings trilogy. For those of you unfamiliar with Tolkien's histories of Middle Earth, here's a quick recap: his book The Hobbit tells how Bilbo Baggins retrieved The One Ring from Gollum. Now Bilbo's nephew Frodo has it. Gandalf the wizard has told Frodo to destroy the Ring by taking it to Mount Doom and casting it into the fires of the Earth, but Mount Doom is located in the centre of Mordor, the lands controlled by the Forces of Evil. It is guarded by massive armies of Orcs, Trolls and other unpleasant creatures under Sauron's direct command.

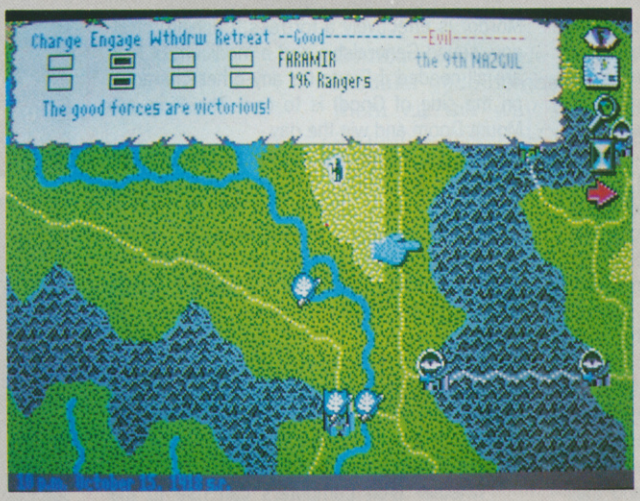
Success in this mission robs Sauron of his

COMBAT IN MIDDLE EARTH

So far, Melbourne House haven't had anything to show on the *War in Middle Earth* 8-bit front, but the player should be able to get personally involved in fights, directing the moves of combatants as if playing a beat-em-up. In 16-bit implementations, player involvement in fights is fairly minimal.

If a fight is about to start somewhere in Middle Earth, a window opens on screen at the Campaign or Animation level and the player has the option to transfer to the location and watch what goes on, or run things remotely from the Campaign Map screen.

During combat, a window opens, showing who's involved in the scrap and offering four option boxes for each of the main characters or armies fighting on the side of Good. As the struggle progresses, text messages report on what is happening and the player can select alternative strategies for the forces controlled. Issuing an order to Charge sends folks steaming into the fray, while Engage results in a more considered approach to fighting. Withdraw effects a minor retreat which can be followed up by a command to Charge or Engage, but Retreat results in a total rout, and combat can't be resumed unless the bad guys decide to chase after the hastily-departing goodies.



A solitary Nazgul proves no match for Faramir and an army of a couple of hundred Rangers. For once, the good guys won!

The relative fighting capabilities of the forces found in Middle Earth soon become apparent – an army of Orcs quickly makes mincemeat of an army of cavalry, for instance, wiping out hundreds of horsemen but only losing a handful of Orcs. A group of hobbits armed with elven blades is no match for a single Nazgul if a fight starts, and even if you try to issue Retreat orders to all the hobbits present, at least one is generally killed, so make sure Frodo gets to do a runner with the Ring...

Naturally, morale and health affect the fighting capabilities of forces, and additional weapons or armour can be found and used to improve the odds.

powers for ever, and rids Middle Earth of Evil. Understandably, Sauron wants his ring back, so he has dispatched nine Nazguls to scour Middle Earth and seek out whoever holds it. If a Nazgul finds the bearer of the Ring, a fight to the death ensues, and once a Nazgul has possession of the Ring, all the Sauron's emissaries head back to Mordor. If armies allied to the cause of Good fail to prevent the Ring from falling into Sauron's hands, then Darkness will envelop Middle Earth for the rest of time.

A classic struggle between the forces of good and evil...

There is only one way to win the *War*, and that is to destroy The Ring. Melbourne House have used the information contained in the Lord of the Rings trilogy to build up the gameworld, but it doesn't mean that play slavishly follows the plot of Tolkien's books. At the beginning, all the characters have pre-set missions and if you start the game, sit back and do nothing, events will unfold on their own – but the forces of Evil get to recover the Ring and return it to Sauron.

It's up to the player to influence the course of events and ensure that The One Ring is destroyed. To begin with, only two parties can be controlled by the player: Frodo and a couple of hobbits accompanying him, and a small army of Rangers located near Mordor. Hobbits are no match for Nazguls, and legging it towards Mordor is almost certain to result in victory for Sauron.

The Witch King wanders on his evil way – he looks like a Nazgul but wears a crown

An army of 500 Trolls are garrisoned at Barad-Dur, and well 'ard they are too.

For the quest to succeed, help is needed. If other armies are to be mobilised to the cause, then artifacts have to be found and taken to their leaders in order to establish credentials for command – which is where the adventure side of gameplay is introduced.

Providing Frodo and his party manage to avoid the Nazguls in the early stages of play, they can start travelling the length and breadth of Middle Earth in search of potions, weapons, armour and magical artifacts that improve their chances of success. In these travels, they come across helpful characters who may drop hints as to the location of vital items, or even join the questing party, improving the odds when a fight starts.

As the adventure game progresses, the strategic element develops. When the correct items are discovered and taken to the leaders of men, dwarves and elves, so armies join the cause and allow the player to command their movements. Gradually the player becomes less of an adventurer and more of a General – but approaching the task as a pure wargame is unlikely to lead to success. Sauron's forces are large, powerful and cleverly deployed, while Mordor is effectively a fortress. Cunning, strategy, sound Generalship and a modicum of luck are all needed if Frodo (or any other character on the side of Good) is to cast The Ring into Mount Doom and win the day.

Casting aside any ideas of producing a sequel to *The Hobbit*, Melbourne House have produced a game that is not easy to play at first, but one which should have an almost unprecedented depth of play and 'lastability' on 16-bit machines. They have managed to create an environment which closely follows the events portrayed in Lord of The Rings, but one which allows the player to experiment with tactics and influence the predetermined outcome. Arcadesters are likely to give up within half an hour, once they have marvelled at the graphics for a while, but persistence pays off...

Whether 8-bit computers can rise to the occasion and offer a similar level of absorption remains to be seen.

● Graeme Kidd

TALKING TOLKIEN

John Ronald Ruel Tolkien was first and foremost an academic – Merton professor of English at Oxford University, he created the fantasy land of Middle Earth primarily as a personal diversion, writing a detailed history, and producing maps and illustrations of the strange creatures that inhabited the land.

The Hobbit, Tolkien's first book, followed the adventures of a good-natured hobbit who ends up in possession of The One Ring, an incredibly powerful and evil object forged long ago. It set the scene for a massively detailed trilogy of books: The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers and The Return of the King which detail the events leading up to the ultimate destruction of The RIng.

Tolkien wrote other whimsical stories set in Middle Earth, including Farmer Giles of Ham and The Adventures of Tom Bombadil, and co-operated in a project with Donald Swann which led to many of the songs featured in the Middle Earth stories being set to music.

After his father's death in 1973, Christopher Tolkien produced The Silmarillion and Unfinished Tales – edited volumes of his father's unpublished stories.

Further details about Professor Tolkien and his works can be obtained by contacting the secretary of The Tolkien Society at 35 Amesbury Crescent, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 3RD. Send an sae – it's a charity!

HOBBIT FREEBIE!

If you'd like to be the owner of a special, deluxe edition of the book that sets the scene for The Lord of the Rings – The Hobbit – simply write your name and address on a slip of paper and send it to Hobbit, ACE, 4 Queen Street, Bath, Avon, BA1 1EJ. We have one copy of this delightful and valuable tome to give away, and it goes to the sender of the first slip of paper drawn on 10th February.

Get to it!

RELEASE BOX

16-bit	£24.99dk	IMMINENT
SPECTRUM	£9.99cs	OUT NOW
AMSTRAD	£9.99cs	OUT NOW

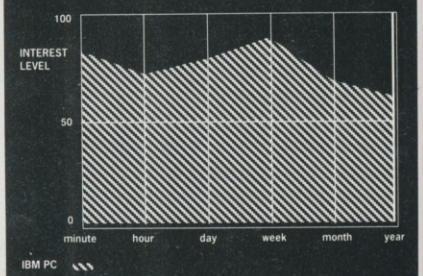
IBM PC VERSION

An absorbing game, that doesn't move terribly fast even at the 'Very Hasty' setting. Disk accesses, needed to load new location graphics at Animation level or to swap between mapping levels introduce delays which become a little irksome. Nevertheless, the scope and quality of the game mean it has long-lasting appeal. A product that should entertain a wide range of people, not just Tolkein fans or wargamers, who are prepared to put cerebral effort into having fun. Beautifully done. (VGA version reviewed and photographed.)

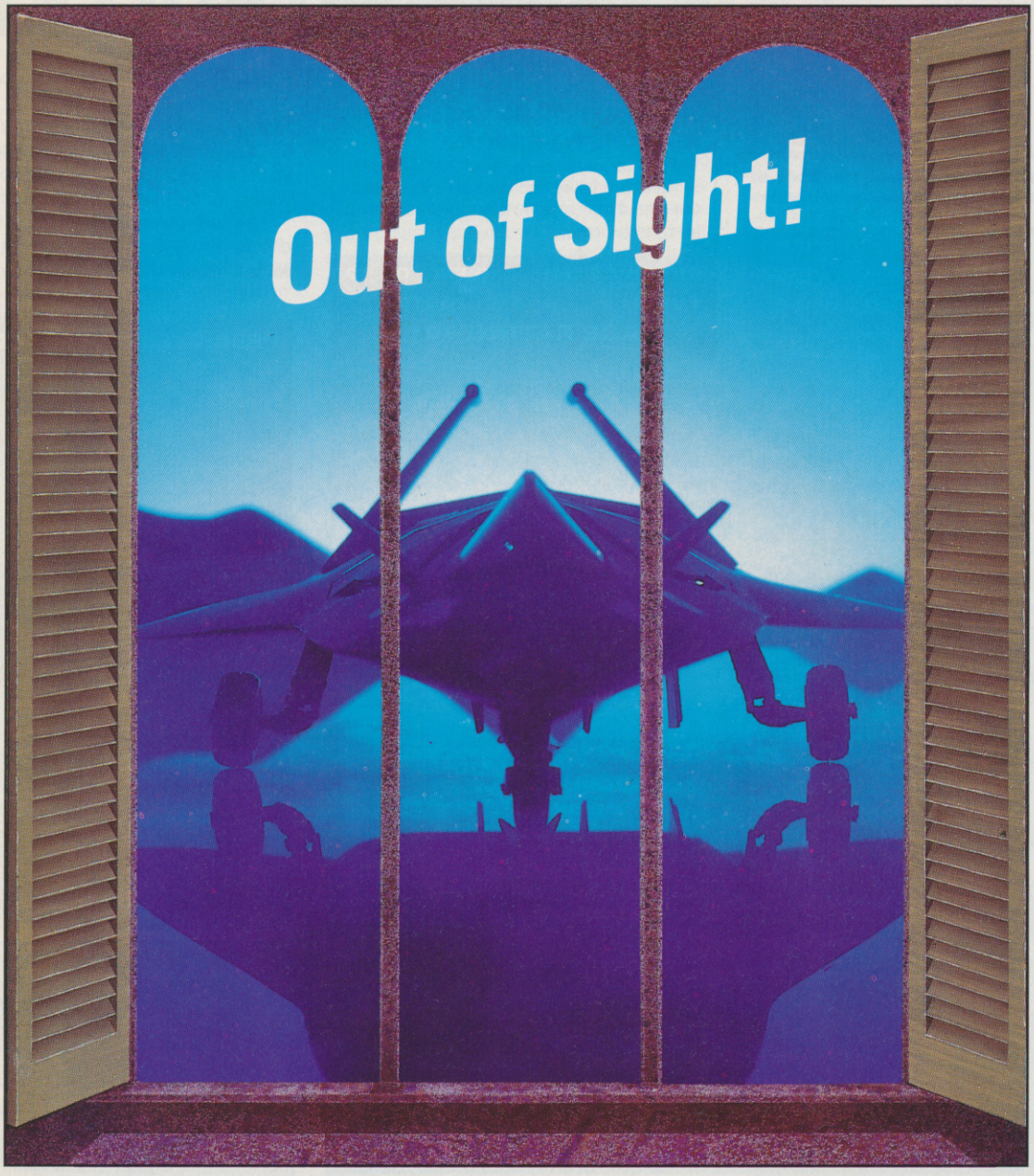
GRAPHICS	9	**IQ FACTOR**	8
AUDIO	3	**FUN FACTOR**	5

ACE RATING 914

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Initially stunning, it takes a while before you learn enough to start achieving...



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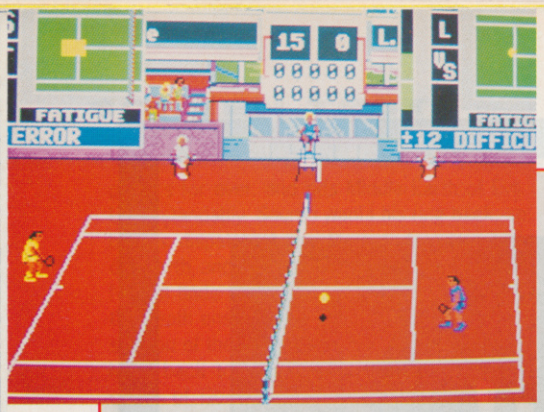


EGA PC – on the centre court in front of an expectant crowd. Note control boxes in the top left and right of the screen, where all the shot decisions are taken.

SERVE AND VOLLEY

ELECTRONIC ARTS get smashed

OH I say! Add your own commentary to the latest in the line of tennis games. There won't be any disputed line calls though – what the computer says goes.

The court is viewed as if from the side stands, and can be accompanied by one of three backgrounds. Before playing a match you can fiddle with oodles of set-up commands to get the right balance. You can play against the computer or another player and choose from 10 pre-set opponents or create a new one. Players are rated for speed against endurance, forehand against backhand and power against accuracy.

Matches can be played on hard, grass or clay courts and over one, three or five sets. There are three skill levels – easy really is easy and difficult is just that. You can also enter for single matches or a knockout tournament between eight players.

The playing mechanism looks extremely complicated at first, but in reality is simplicity itself. All you need to do is time presses of the fire button to choose the type of shot you want to play, and play it at the right time. Movement to the ball is handled automatically, although you can move to a general court position while waiting for the opponent's return.

It's well presented and can be as easy or difficult as you want. Classy sporting action that will last through many a Wimbledon fortnight.

● Bob Wade

RELEASE BOX		
C64/128	£9.95cs • £14.95dk	IMMINENT
IBM PC	£24.95dk	OUT NOW

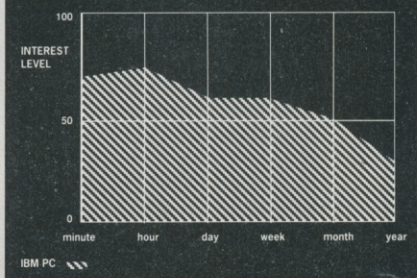
PC VERSION

The EGA version looks sharp but the CGA leaves something to be desired from the colour selection. The action is quite slow, but that doesn't harm the gameplay.

GRAPHICS	7(4)	IQ FACTOR	2
AUDIO	4	FUN FACTOR	7

ACE RATING 701

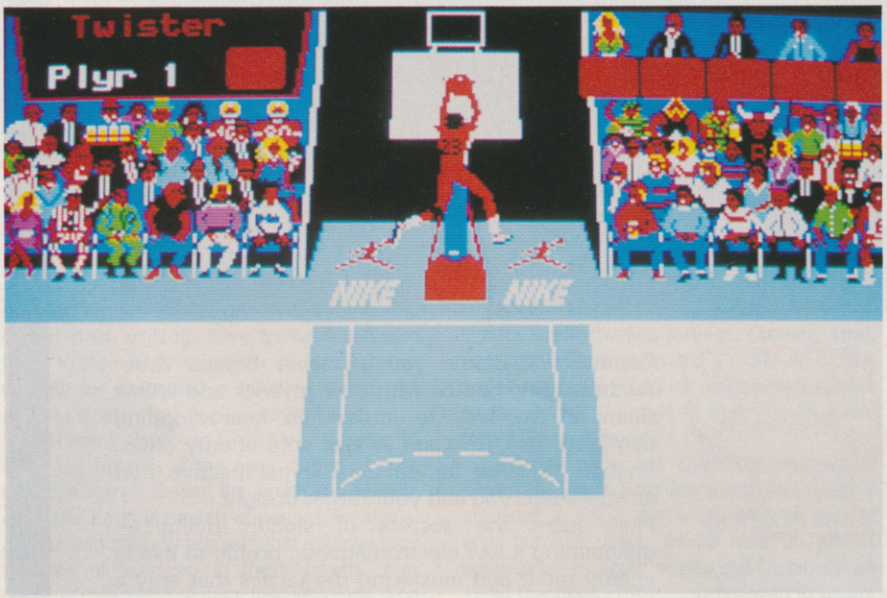
PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Never very thrilling but long-term it will still be very enjoyable.

JORDAN VS BIRD

Rim-bend with ELECTRONIC ARTS



YOU are forgiven if your immediate reaction was "who?" because unless you're a big fan of American basketball, the names Larry Bird and Michael Jordan won't mean that much.

It's obviously a basketball sim, but there are no teams in sight. Instead the game is all man-to-man action as you take the part of one of the ball-slinging stars, and a friend (or the computer) takes the part of the other, in three gruelling confrontations.

One on One is just that, a straight battle. You can opt for a full game of four quarters (deciding their lengths for yourself) or play straight through to eleven or fifteen points without any time limit. *Slam Dunk Contest* allows up to four players to join in a shooting competition, slamming and dunking away in an orgy of acrobatics – in a solo game, try following 'Air' Jordan as he demonstrates a slam dunk. Not to be outdone, Larry Bird gets a game of his own, *3-Point Shoot Out*, where the player has to shoot baskets against the clock.

If you like this particular style of basketball, you'll probably get a lot of enjoyment from *Jordan vs Bird*. It's certainly well executed and the variable difficulty levels make it challenging. One to try before you buy unless you're a real fan though.

● Andy Smith

RELEASE BOX		
C64/128	£14.95dk	IMMINENT
IBM PC	£24.95dk	OUT NOW

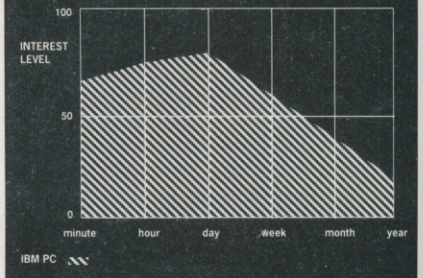
PC VERSION

The CGA version's fine. The EGA version's better. It's playable and challenging and if you're into this sort of thing you'll get a lot enjoyment from it.

GRAPHICS	7	IQ FACTOR	2
AUDIO	5	FUN FACTOR	7

ACE RATING 711

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Great – if you like that sort of thing.

GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT

ELECTRONIC ARTS go circuit training

AMIGA owners have *Ferrari Formula One* to boot up when they fancy a quick spin in a car with a ground clearance of about three centimetres. But what do poor PC owners have? Very little until now.

From Accolade – the *Test Drive* people – comes this racing sim that puts you firmly in the driving seat. There are three basic modes: practice, single race and the full-blown championship.

In practice mode you can choose any of the eight circuits and tear around to your heart's content without worrying about any other cars. The single race option also lets you select any circuit, but now in competition against other cars. Take part in the championship and you'll race against other world-class drivers on all the circuits.

As well as being able to choose the circuit, the player can select one of three cars to drive for each race, and the difficulty level can be adjusted to taste. Fancy driving an automatic that doesn't mind if you constantly over-rev the engine? No trouble. Or would you rather change gears yourself and drive a temperamental, delicate piece of machinery that needs skilful handling? Again, no problem. For PC owner/drivers it's got to be worth a long, hard look.

● Andy Smith

RELEASE BOX			
C64/128	£9.95 cs	£14.95dk	IMMINENT
IBM PC		£24.95dk	OUT NOW

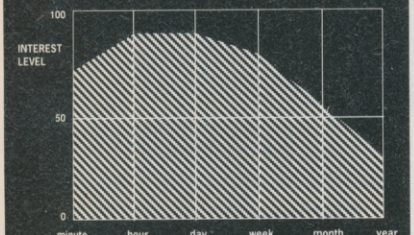
PC VERSION

Plays well even using the numeric keypad, although a joystick is better. The EGA version's better-looking, but it's still a great game in CGA.

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	4
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	8

ACE RATING 862

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Thrilling and as complex as you make it.

POWERPLAY HOCKEY

ELECTRONIC ARTS pucker up

JOLLY hockey sticks, chaps. There's not a lot of laughs in ice hockey – just a lot of blood, bruises and noise. The packaging and poster might cause a wry smile though – it's not often you see Mikhail Gorbachov wearing an ice hockey helmet.

Hockey simulations have tended to be just football on ice, but the control here gets nearer to the real thing. It takes time to manoeuvre on the ice – you can't do 180 degree turns in the blink of an eye. You can play the game either one-on-one, or with a full team in which you control only one player.

Fans will be pleased to know that features like roughing, crosschecking, icing, offside and slap shots are all included. The time periods and skill levels can also be altered. At the highest skill level the action is fast and furious.

When playing as part of a team, you can rely on intelligent behaviour from your teammates and from the automatically-operated goaltender, so you can concentrate on just the one player. Penalties have been fully implemented as well, even when a fight breaks out – and they do!

It's the best ice hockey simulation yet, although the action is rather remote because the figures are so small.

● Bob Wade

RELEASE BOX		
C64/128	£14.95dk	OUT NOW

C64 VERSION

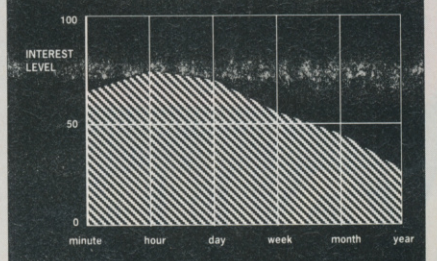
The graphics are small but pleasantly formed. Best bit of the sound effects is the snatches of organ music after goals and other happenings.

GRAPHICS	5	IQ FACTOR	2
AUDIO	4	FUN FACTOR	6

ACE RATING 686

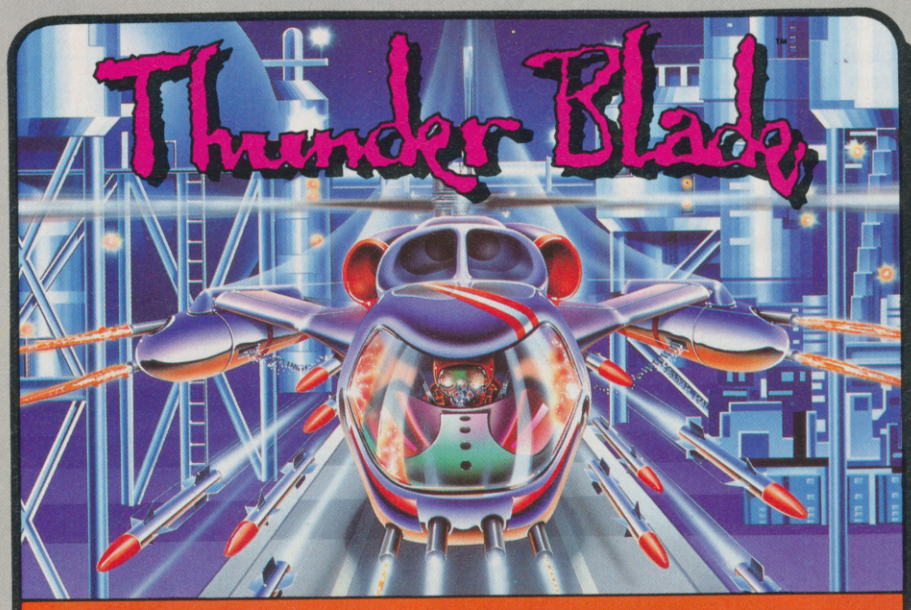
C64 – East meets West in a cold war where the only missiles are rubber discs.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Best ice hockey simulation around.

SURE FIRE SMASH



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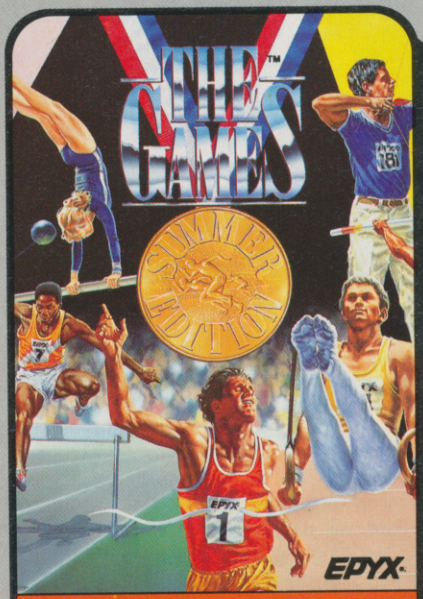

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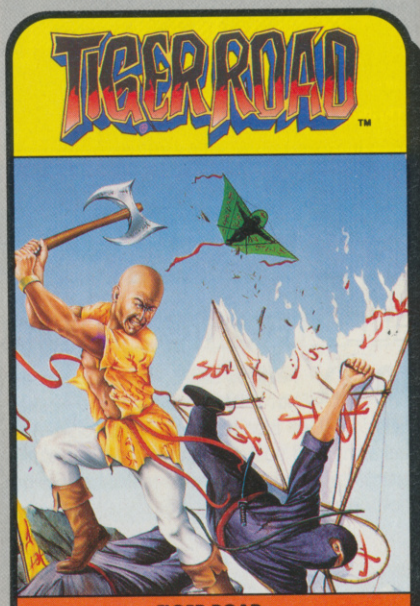

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PURPLE SATURN DAY

Extraterrestrial EXXOS

912 ACE RATING

Games are usually none too friendly to aliens, but here we have some inter-species rivalry that doesn't end up with dead bodies all over the place. Not that things are going to be entirely free of animosity – because the aim in this cosmic sporting clash is still to win.

The contest takes place near Saturn, where you participate in four different events against seven alien opponents. Before launching into the games proper you can practice each event against a droid which, although not as accomplished as the aliens, is no slouch.

The tournament is run on a knockout basis with the initial pairings randomly selected. You go head-to-head with an alien in each of the four events and the one with most points progresses to the next round. This means that despite one really weak event it's still possible to catch up with big victories in the others.

A status screen is available for all eight contestants. This shows the high scores they have achieved in each event, the percentage of victories they have in that event and their personal attributes. All of these improve with practice, but it takes a long time to be able to match most of the computer players' figures.

Coming from the same stable as *Captain Blood* and *Get Dexter*, you would expect this to have superb graphics, and it certainly does, but it's also got excellent gameplay. Initially you may find the aliens overwhelming, but they aren't unbeatable. They will, however, always provide good opposition – so if your guard is dropped they nip in and win. In the long term it's a matter of improving your averages and attributes, and remains very enjoyable.

Bob Wade

This is the statistical readout for the human player. Although the human ratings look vastly inferior at present they have little effect on the action and can be improved with practice.

The tournament table shows all eight contestants and their score in each round. The blank on the bottom row is where the human player has 'scratched' from the contest.

To the victor go the spoils. Around him are the previous winners of the title.

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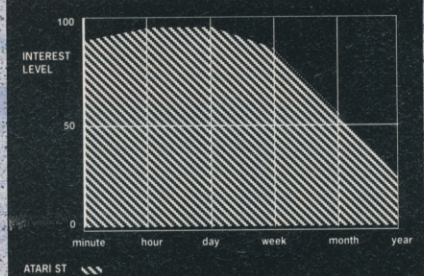
ST VERSION

The graphics are dazzlingly good, from the fine detail of all the artwork to the scrolling and perspective effects in Ring Pursuit and Tronic Slider. The intro music is fine, just like the sound effects.

GRAPHICS	9	**IQ FACTOR**	6
AUDIO	5	**FUN FACTOR**	8

ACE RATING 912

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE

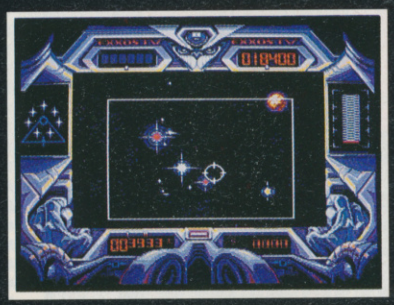


Sensory overload at first and a tough tournament with great gameplay to back it up.

TIME JUMP

The simplest of the games, because it's little more than a shoot-em-up. Targets nip onto the screen from the foreground and have to be captured by putting a cursor over them and firing. In all three waves of action the targets come almost too fast to deal with and in random patterns.

Finally you warp into an end sequence where your level of success is illustrated by the attractive graphic evolution of an image through many stages. This is the weakest of the games, but it doesn't harm the overall package.



The large white stars have already been captured, and the cursor, the white rectangle, is closing in to capture another one.

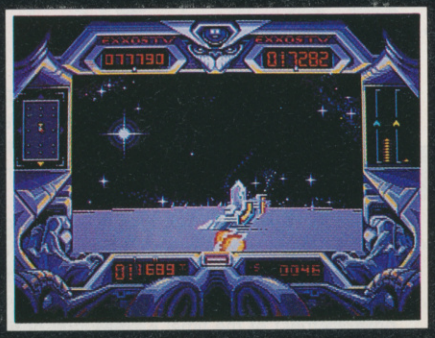
BRAIN BOWLER

The trickiest of the four sub-games to get the hang of but ultimately the most rewarding. The screen shows a cutaway of a brain, exposing computer circuitry. The aim is to activate your half of the brain by guiding six impulses through the circuitry to their target.

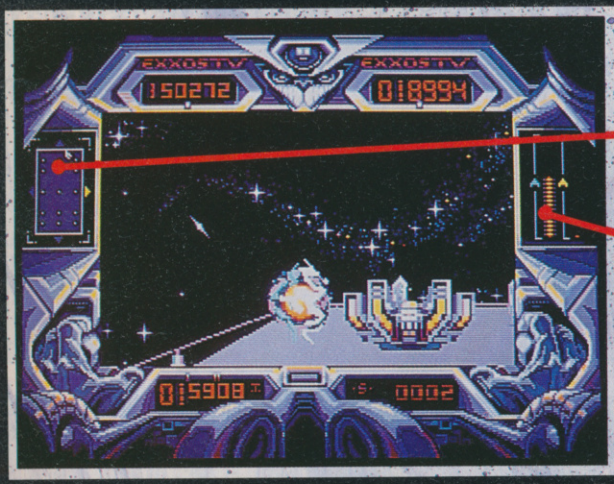
The player controls a spinning spiky orange object that dives down to the circuitry to activate things. There are three main things to be done: flick switches to allow impulses to pass along a wire; flick a one-way gate while an impulse is stuck on it so it can pass through; and capture impulses. This last action is the trickiest because the impulse must be picked up from a special site and deposited in a socket, and then another impulse has to pass over it to fix it in place. This also builds a bridge across the sockets, allowing impulses to get to their targets. The computer opponents adopt

TRONIC SLIDER

The two opponents control buggies on a large flat grid that is peppered with pillars. An energy bolt intermittently sparks onto the grid and whizzes about. When shot it releases a mass of orange balls which can be collected by driving into them. This increases your energy level and score. However, collisions with pillars, the edge of the grid and the other buggy cost energy and points. There's a time limit, so it's just a matter of collecting as many energy balls as possible.



Shoot the bolt and it turns into the orange spheres visible in the foreground.

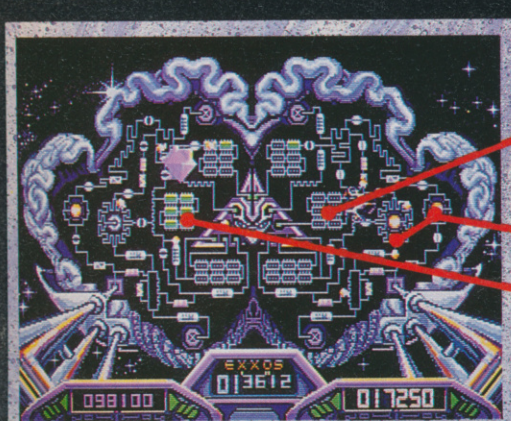


Ahead are the energy bolt (on the left) and the back of the alien craft.

The overhead map of the playfield shows pillars, the players and the energy bolt.

This indicates the energy levels that the players have managed to collect. The computer player, on the left, is currently way ahead.

differing tactics – some are very fast while others concentrate on trying to mess up your half of the brain. Even though it's the least impressive of the games to look at, it will keep you hooked the longest.



This spark acts as an activation device after picking up an impulse.

Captured impulses are dropped in here, where they turn green when another impulse passes over them.

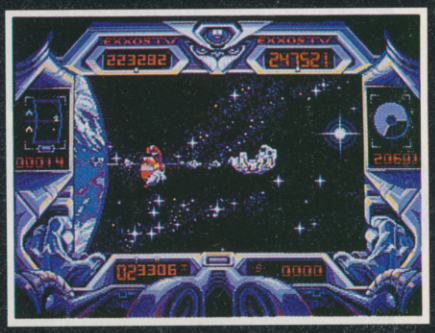
These two points are where impulses can be picked up.

This completed block of green chips has allowed an impulse to get to the centre of the brain.

RING PURSUIT

A race through the asteroid belt surrounding Saturn. Not only do you have to circle the planet once, trying to avoid all the space debris, but a slalom course made up of red and yellow satellites must be negotiated at the same time. Passing the correct side of a satellite while in the lead adds to your score. Go the wrong side and the alien scores.

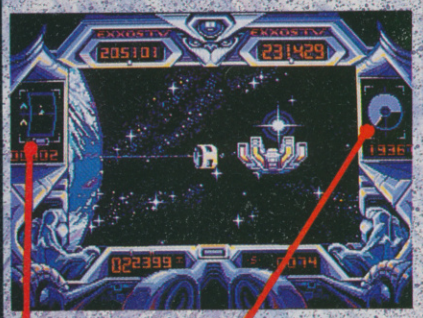
This event calls for a mixture of speed and dexterity. The alien can be forced to go the wrong side of a satellite when in the lead,
but it's safest to make the running instead.



This time the alien has gone the right way around a red satellite – better catch him fast.

The onrushing boulders and satellites look very impressive, but it is the radar scanner on the left of the screen that requires the closest attention. It doesn't show the asteroids, but it does display most clearly the slalom route and the alien's position.

The alien is slightly ahead and about to go the wrong side of a yellow satellite – more points for you.



The radar screen shows the two ships and the satellites. It's easiest to slalom from this but you will hit a lot of rocks in the process.

The sphere gradually fills in purple until a circuit of Saturn is completed

BY FAIR MEANS OR FOUL

A SUPERIOR boxing game???

SOMETIMES a person has to cheat, simple as that. Whether it's typing in a poke or making illegal moves in a boxing match, sometimes it's the only solution.

In this one or two player boxing sim it's the illegal moves that are needed as you challenge for the Championship. Playing solo, that means taking on six increasingly difficult opponents on your way to the top, and then more in defence of your crown.

There are fifteen rounds per bout and a total of eight available moves, four fair and four foul. The two boxers are viewed side-on, while a referee wanders around the ring watching the boxers - most of the time! A small icon of your boxer in the top corner changes colour according to how much attention the referee is paying. A red icon means he's watching like a hawk, a yellow one means you've got a chance of getting away with an illegal move and green means it's definitely time to start letting loose with head butts, kicks and groin punches. You don't have to keep an eye on the indicator all the time, because the ref often falls asleep and a large speech bubble full of ZZZZ's appears.

If your man gets caught making an illegal move, the ref shouts 'foul' and you lose one of your five lives. You also have to be careful not to get too close to the other boxer, because the contestants go into a hold and swap sides. If this happens too often, you lose another life.

By Fair Means... is by no means a good boxing sim. The gameplay is poor and it's got little in it of any challenge. Admittedly it's supposed to be more of a laugh than a serious simulation, but it's doubtful you'll find it entertaining for long.

● Andy Smith

C64 - you've a fair chance of getting away with a low blow - should you risk it?

SPECTRUM VERSION

The mostly monochrome graphics are adequate, but the animation is poor (the way the ref moves especially) and this, coupled with weak sound effects, does little to keep you interested.

GRAPHICS	5	IQ FACTOR	1
AUDIO	2	FUN FACTOR	5

ACE RATING 332

C64 VERSION

The graphics are more colourful but they're just as badly animated. Again the sound is poor, and you won't be playing this in a year's time.

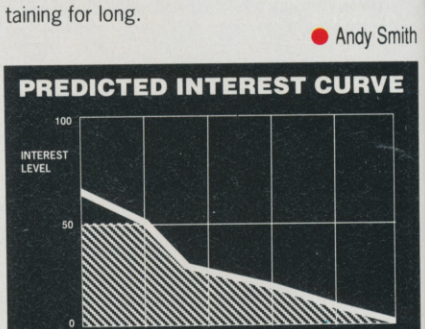
GRAPHICS	6	IQ FACTOR	1
AUDIO	2	FUN FACTOR	5

ACE RATING 338

RELEASE BOX

SPECTRUM	£7.95cs	£12.95dk	REVIEWED
AMSTRAD	£9.95cs	£14.95dk	IMMINENT
C64/128	£9.95cs	£11.95dk	REVIEWED

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Doesn't last the distance.

TKO

ACCOLADE get punchy

BLACK eyes and bloody noses feature heavily in this latest offering from US software house Accolade. And why not? It is, after all, another boxing sim.

Two players can compete simultaneously and slug it out over three, five or ten two-minute rounds. Alternatively, a solo player can take on five computer-controlled opponents in the quest for the title (again, you choose the number of rounds).

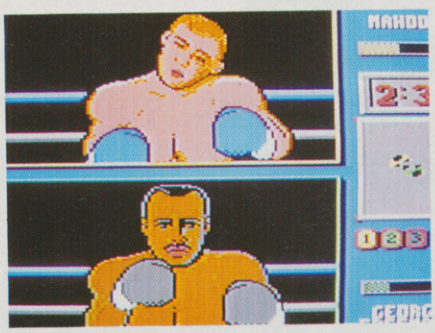
The screen display is split horizontally into two, with a boxer in each half facing the player. The top boxer is yours when playing solo and every time you throw one of the nine available punches a large gloved hand comes flying out of the screen. Watch the bottom screen as well and you'll see whether the punch landed or was blocked.

The punches fall into two groups, body and head. Moving the joystick to one of eight positions and then hitting the fire button determines which kind of punch is thrown, the idea being to hit the opponent where he isn't guarded. He's out to do the same to you though, so you have to alter your guard to avoid taking blows. That simply requires pushing or pulling the joystick up or down without the fire button pressed until you are happy with one of the five guarding positions available.

The strength of the punch your boxer throws depends on which guard position he is currently using. For example, if he's got his hands high, protecting the head, the punches thrown will be relatively weak jabs. If the guard is low, he can really get some power into the punches and do some serious damage – if the blows connect!

The split-screen display works effectively and it's a fun game to play. You'll find it tough to beat the computer opponents at first but you'll eventually master them and enjoy the challenge along the way.

● Andy Smith



C64 – Mahoon takes a nasty sock on the jaw. Perhaps he needs to raise his guard?

RELEASE BOX

C64/128	£9.95cs	£14.95dk	REVIEWED
IBM PC	Prices TBA		MARCH 89

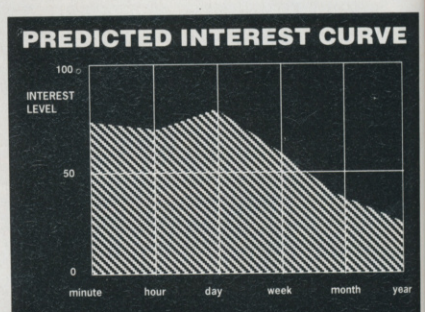
C64 VERSION

The graphics are colourful and well-animated. You'll soon beat the computer opponents, but the two-player mode adds some lasting interest.

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	3
AUDIO	5	FUN FACTOR	8

ACE RATING 719

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



The two player option increases lasting interest.

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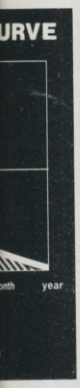

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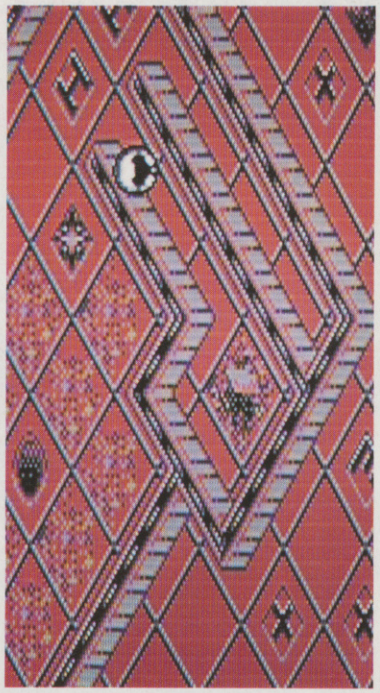
Strange control methods have been responsible for producing some of the best games ever, like *Spindizzy* and *Zarch*. However, some unplayable turkeys have also been caused by idiosyncratic controls. So how does moving a ball of variable weight, size and speed around a maze measure up – classic or clunker?

The mazes are viewed in 3D and are divided into plates. Each level comprises four plates, connected by two-way lifts – there is usually more than one link between a pair of plates. To complete a level, the exit has to be found, and that inolves travelling through all four areas... On the first level the player is confronted with a simple linear route, and it's a matter ofnavigating through one plate at a time, but later levels involve switching between plates. Often you'll see a lift or icon that is tantalisingly close, but need to follow a tortuous route to get to the chosen point.

Trying to go anywhere in a hurry usually proves deadly. The desire to move fast has to be tempered with the need to keep the sphere under total control. On the other hand, dawdling isn't healthy because the floor tiles that are passed over decay slowly, blocking the route back, and retracing a path through a section of the maze may prove essential to survival and eventual escape...

Dotted all over the mazes are symbols on the floor tiles which have different effects on the sphere. The most important tiles affect the mass and volume of the sphere, which not only changes the handling, but also governs where the sphere can actually go. For instance, if it's made heavier the ball can't pass over cracked floor tiles. If it is made too large it can't pass through narrower areas in the maze. Then there are times where the sphere needs to be

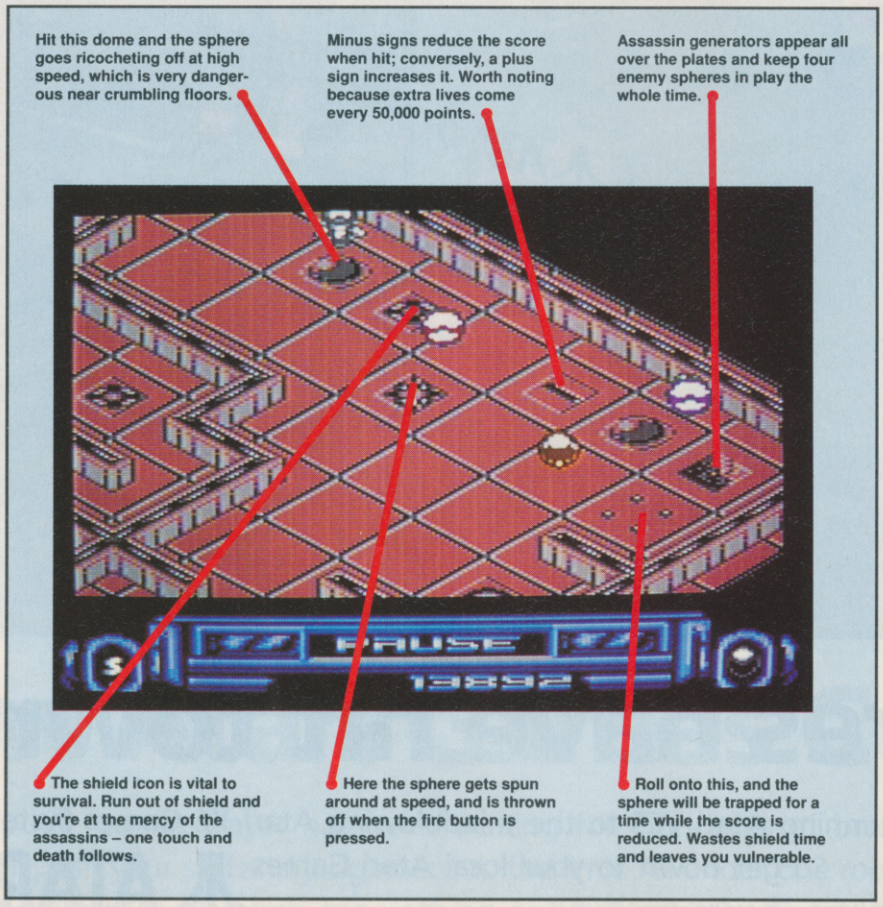


Beware the 'spinner' and the tiles that are already collapsing behind. Sneak past the 'heavy' icons and cross the floor to the hole...

...down the hole is a safe spot. You can head straight down again, taking you onto plate three.

INCREDIBLE SHR

ELECTRIC DREAMS of dwindling balls



RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	£19.99dk	IMMINENT
AMIGA	£24.99dk	Feb 1989
SPECTRUM	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	IMMINENT
AMSTRAD	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	IMMINENT
C64/128	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	OUT NOW

C64 VERSION

The isometric 3D graphics are impressive, if not very colourful. The scrolling is lovely and smooth, just as you would expect. The intro music bounces along jollily and the effects have a suitably springy feel to them.

GRAPHICS	7	**IQ FACTOR**	7
AUDIO	6	**FUN FACTOR**	7

ACE RATING 923

...down the hole is a safe spot. You can head straight down again, taking you onto plate three.

Arriving in a dangerous zone, you need to get to the shield icon quickly, before the assassin spheres get to you...

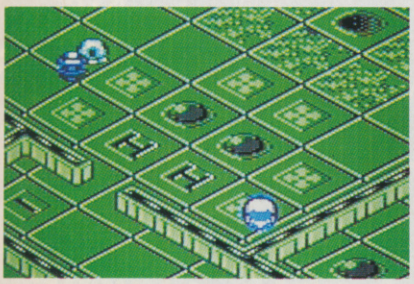
...after grabbing the shield, sneak down the corridor and squeeze past some more 'heavy' icons on the way to the tube...

...going down the tube leads to an open area. Now it's not so easy to decide where to go next – happy exploring.

RINKING SPHERE

either small and light to make a jump, or large and heavy in order to move things around.

Much of the gameplay is a matter of mapping out the mazes and knowing where the floor icons are, so that you can plot a route to use all the necessary tiles. Another essential consideration is finding the icons that give you



Here's a tricky area – 'heavy' squares make getting to the tube difficult if rolled over, while surrounding icons increase the sphere's volume...

a shield to that protects you from marauding assassins – without a shield, the sphere will almost certainly be destroyed, which means returning to the start of the level.

Assassins come charging out of generators and follow your sphere – fortunately they don't home in too fast. If there's no shield the last line of defence is to try to shoot the assassins, by firing in the direction of movement. Ammunition is limited, but can be replenished at ammo dumps, which are placed before the start of a level.

Other floor icons do wacky things to the sphere like speeding it up, spinning it round and releasing it randomly, capturing it and reducing the score, giving bonus points or plopping you down a black hole. With all these icons lying in wait for the sphere it's easy to get bounced helplessly around from one icon to another if you veer out of control.

At first the control is awkward, and the fact that the plates get complicated doesn't help quick progress. It doesn't take long to get to grips with the controls and maze layouts, though, and once you've done so *ISS* affords the same sort of rewards that other 'control-intensive' games like *Thrust* and *Spindizzy* give. A star game that is an impressive debut for programmers Foursfield.

● Bob Wade

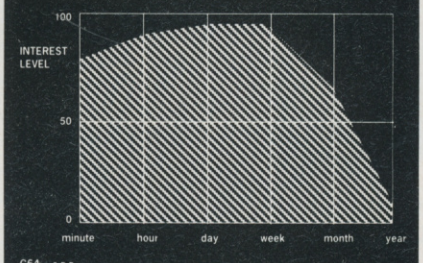
FOURSFIELD TO THE FORE

ISS is the first game from programming team Foursfield. It's a very impressive debut, and they've already been signed up to produce the pinball simulation *Timescanner* for Electric Dreams – with the hope that they can produce the realistic ball-movement found in *ISS*.

The team is made up of Stefan and Anna Ufnowski who designed the game, Colin Reed who programmed and Steve Green, the graphics man. The inspiration for the project apparently came from a pair of slippers, the intricate weave of which gave Anna the idea for a game set in the mazey design. Extraordinary.

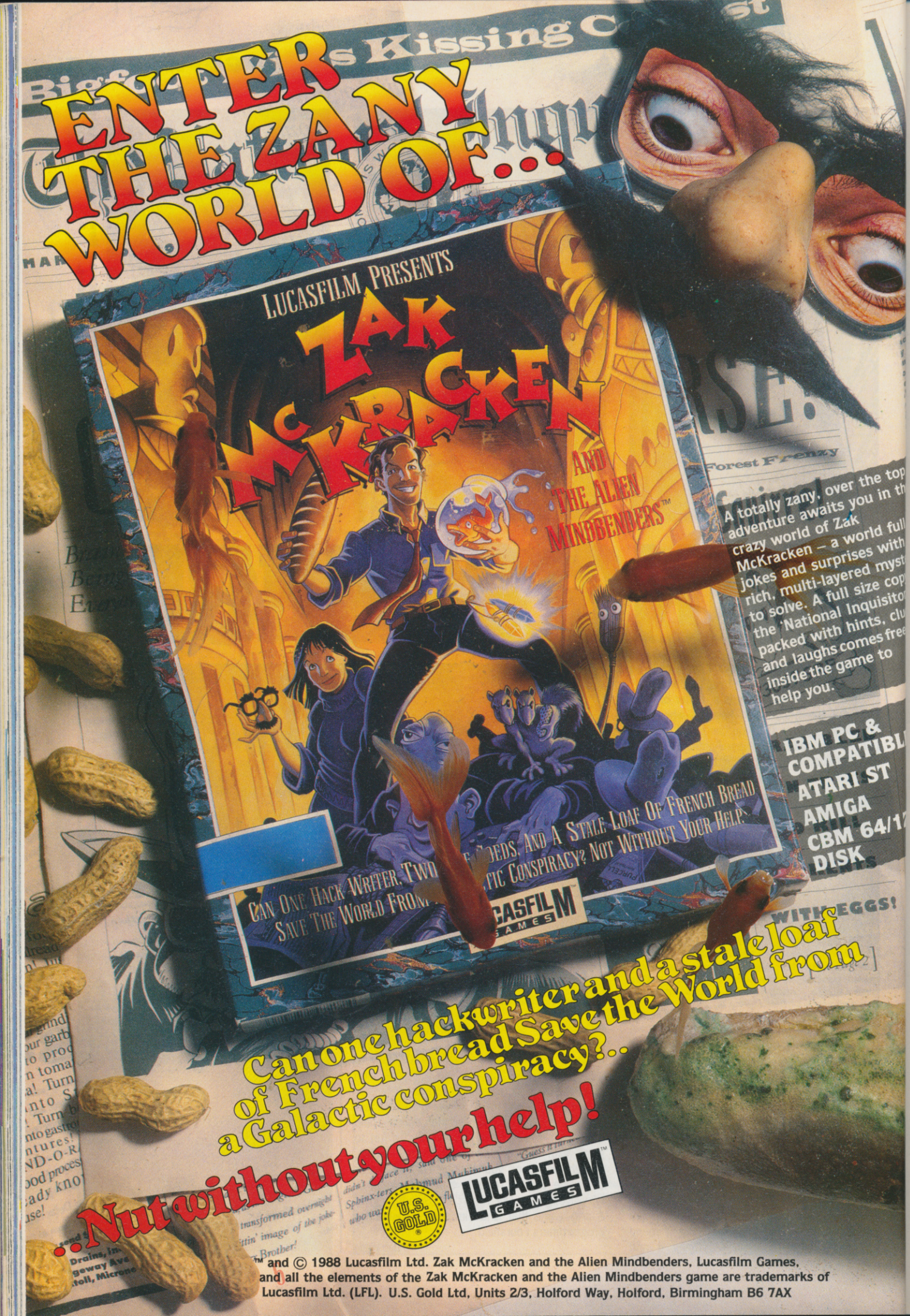
The Foursfield team (from left to right) Stefan Ufnowski, Anna Ufnowski, Steve Green, Colin Reed.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



C64

A great one to explore and map, once you've practised for a while.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910

Kiev, November 1943. Winter is approaching and the German army is in retreat. After suffering defeat at Kursk in July, the Germans have pulled back as far as the Dneiper river where they hope to prepare themselves for the inevitable Soviet winter offensive. Such is the position of the forces at the start of this one or two player wargame.

There are three scenarios, each one starting on a specific date and lasting a set number of turns. The player can choose which side he wishes to play, and what the skill-level of the opponent should be if he is playing solo. The first scenario is the whole campaign, lasting some 50 days (one day equals one turn), from 3 November to 23 December 1943. For this scenario the Russians are in the far stronger position (at least at the start) and the Germans are struggling to hold their ground. The second scenario lasts for 38 days, comencing on 15 November with the German forces ready to counter-attack against a Russian offensive which has forced them to give much ground. The final scenario lasts 18 turns, starting on 5 December with the Germans ready to launch another counter-attack through the 48 Panzer Korps. By this time both sides have received substantial replacements and reinforcements and are much better-equipped than they were at the start of the campaign.

Fire-Brigade is icon and menu driven, and breaks down into two main phases: orders and movement. During the orders phase the player specifies objectives for his units, designates supplies and combat support, and assigns replacements. As the player is a General, the orders go to junior officers who then carry them out to the best of their ability.

With orders issued, the movement phase begins and proceeds hour by hour (combat is instantly resolved) until the next morning. Then you can scan the map and see where you suffered defeat or achieved victory, and update the old plan or review the new one drawn up by your officers (the computer). The game continues in this fashion until either the scenario ends, or one side gains a decisive victory, in which case you can continue. Achieving a victory depends on the amount of Victory Points earned for taking control of towns, railway junctions and other strategic positions.

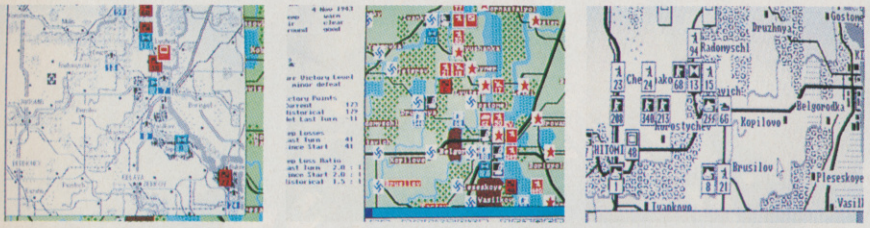
If you're after a simple, easy and quick wargame you can forget *Fire-Brigade*. Although the game structure is very user-friendly, it takes time to play well, and there are too many options offered and decisions required to make it a walkover. Spend some time getting to know the game, though, and you'll be playing it for months to come.

● Andy Smith

Assign objectives to your units by selecting the unit's HQ and dragging the cursor onto a town, city or enemy HQ.

FIRE BRIGADE

Panzers from PANTHER



The simplified strategic map gives you an instant picture of the overall situation. The Batlle display on the Victory/Points map shows how well your units fared yesterday. The mono CGA display shows the starting positions of the forces for the final scenario running from 5-23 December.

RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	TBA	EARLY 89
AMIGA	TBA	EARLY 89
IBM PC	$70.00dk (Australia)	REVIEWED
MAC	$70.00dk (Australia)	REVIEWED

PC VERSION

The graphics are about as exciting as you'd expect for a strategy wargame. But at least on an EGA machine they are colourful. Unfortunately it's all in glorious mono in CGA, but still plays well, and yup, you can link a couple of PC's together and take on a remote human opponent.

GRAPHICS 8 IQ FACTOR 7
AUDIO N/A FUN FACTOR 6
ACE RATING 910

MAC VERSION

Runs on any Mac, including a Mac II, but forget the colour. The game structure of icons and menus makes it very easy to play, once you know what you're doing. You can also link two machines via modem or network and play against a remote human. Unfortunately, it cannot run under Appletalk.

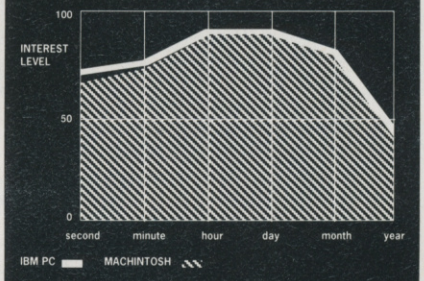
GRAPHICS 8 IQ FACTOR 7
AUDIO N/A FUN FACTOR 6
ACE RATING 908

FIRE-BRIGADE is currently available only from Panther Games in Australia at this address:

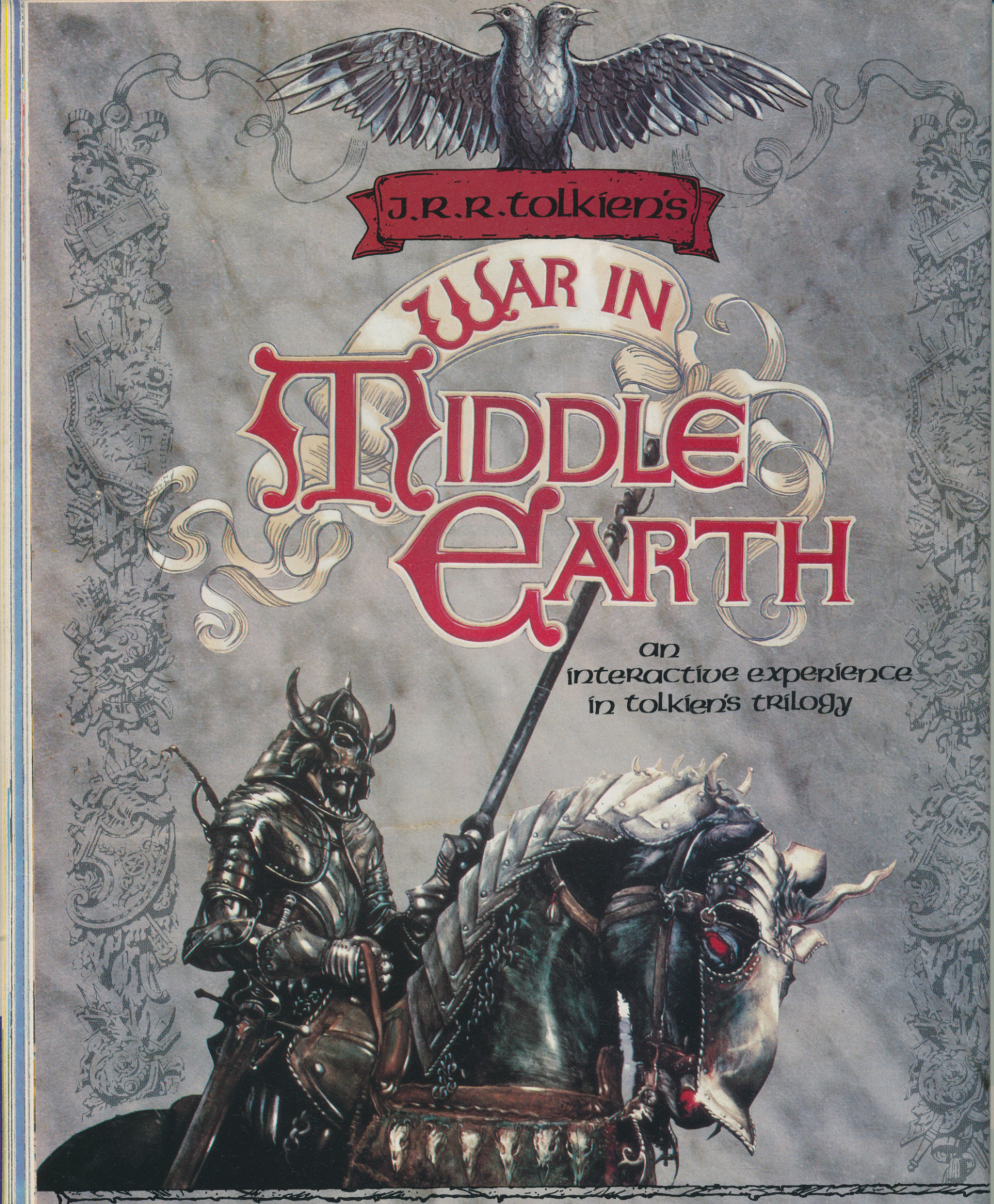
Panther Games Pty Limited, PO Box Eight, Hughes ACT 2065, Australia. Tel +61 62 815150.

The price is $70 Australian inc. Air Mail shipment. Panther are looking for a UK distributor.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



An involving and challenging wargame. Let's hope Panther manage to get a UK distributor.



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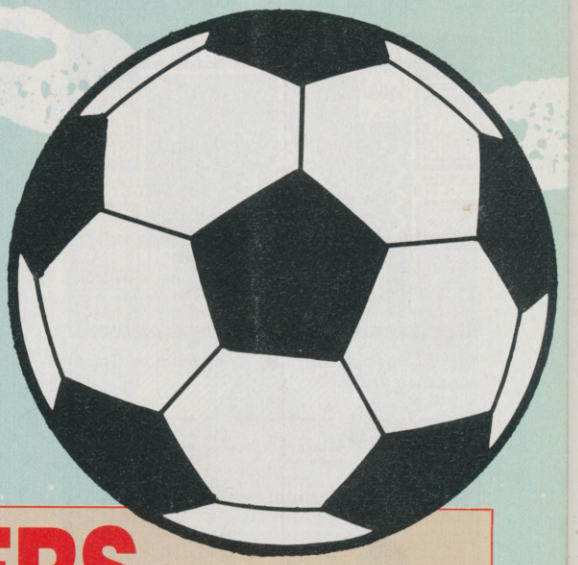
KICK OFF!

Errr, extrornery. Twas the season to be jolly, now tis the season to... errr... go out an buy a Soccer game, twould appear. So now it's over to Phil South, the man they're all calling... errr... Phil South!



Amazing really, but one day you can't find a football game if you want one, then ten come along at once. I don't know exactly why, but it's true to say that nowadays soccer sims are a 'genre', and will be for as long as people can come up with newer better ways of programming them. Sega and Nintendo have soccer cartridges, *Match Day II* won more awards and approbation than Kim Basinger's bottom, and football manager/director type games rival dungeon adventures as the most popular strategy game plotline ever. The links with strategy/adventure become more apparent with releases like Gremlin's *Roy Of The Rovers*, which as well as an average football game has an average arcade adventure too.

The quality of these footy games varies, with some being playable and watchable on the Spectrum without too much trouble, while others are real clonkers which turn Amiga and Atari potential into all the flair of a Casio pocket computer. So let's take a ref's eye view of the current crop of leather ball fantasies and see how many we can kick into touch.

ROY OF THE ROVERS

GREMLIN replay a comic hero

THE whole of Melchester Rovers has been kidnapped, and it is up to *Roy Of The Rovers* (who must have been polishing his Porsche or a starlet's bottom at the time, thus avoiding capture) to find them before the big match. This is the scenario for the first section of *ROTR*, a true-blue, pull-down-menu driven arcade adventure, which for some reason puts me in mind of Andy Capp. You wander around a map of Melchester (supplied with the game) and follow the slightly leaden clues until you do, or indeed don't (it doesn't seem to matter) find the lost team.

Then you are asked to load the footy section of the game. The missing players are miraculously restored, and this is where the game's story falls down. If the Rovers lose the match, the developers can move in and build a block of flats. If they win, then the team can carry on to thrill the crowds and please the readers with their antics, and, who knows, maybe even earn a Fleetway comic annual all to themselves!

The arcade adventure section is well implimented, for sure, but lacks real sparkle and any kind of incentive to complete the task in hand. The footy game is very difficult to control, and you often find yourself running in exactly the opposite direction from the way you'd like to be going. I thought the problem might be a duff joystick, but the game misbehaved with every one I tried, including the trusty Konix Navigator. So thumbs down all round, which is a bit of a shame as the idea had possiblities.

Strolling around the streets looking for clues can be a challenge for some, I know, but to me this adventure's a little lacking in the kind of design points that make the task enjoyable. What it needs is a really cracking football game to act as an antidote. Unfortunately, it doesn't have one.

RELEASE BOX			
C64/128	£8.99cs	£14.99dk	OUT NOW
SPEC 128	£7.99cs		OUT NOW

SPECTRUM VERSION

The Spectrum version has the problem of being monochrome, which makes it hard to distinguish your side from the opposition.

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	7
AUDIO	4	FUN FACTOR	6

ACE RATING 535

Roy of the Spectrum – go find your mates and you can have a jolly ol' game of footy!

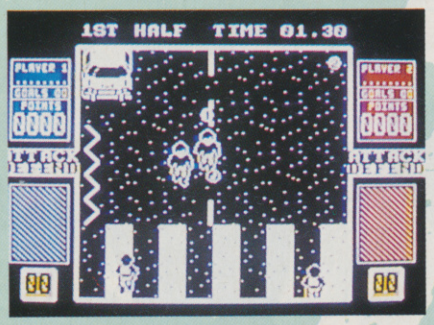
PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE

Bizarre combination of an arcade adventure and a soccer game.

FOUR SOCCER SIMULATOR

Codemasters throw in four games in one

NOT so much a game, more a way of unloading four games in one package. Three spectacularly similar football games, along with a training section bearing more than a passing resemblance to Daley Moustache's Olympic Wossname. The four games are not multiload, and so are entirely separate in nature and on a side each of two cassettes.



Street fooball on the Spectrum – Codemasters style.

RELEASE BOX		
C64/128	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	OUT NOW
SPEC 128	£8.99cs • £12.99dk	OUT NOW
AMSTRAD	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	OUT NOW

Firstly, there's *11-a-Side Soccer*, a conventional enough soccer simulator with the usual 90 minutes of computerised fouling, cheating and 'shin injury' acting. The game responds quite well to your control, and you stand a reasonable chance against the computer. Aside from the fact it can run faster than you, it's actually reasonably easy to tackle and beat. One tricky thing is passing, since you can't see the field beyond your rather limited viewpoint, so actually laying off the ball to another player before Chopper Harris has your nuts on a tray is a trifle problematic. It does have throw-ins, corners, fouling, penalties, offside and the like, so rates as a proper simulator.

Indoor Soccer has the same player graphics and gameplay, but takes place on a pitch with walls around it, so the ball bounces, and only five players a side. *Street Soccer* differs in that instead of a nice neat rectangle to play in, you've got cars, trees and houses to negotiate. One thing it doesn't have is the little man who steals your ball or calls the bobbies so you have to go home.

Finally there's *Soccer Skills*, where you train yourself up. Basically it consists of dribbling the ball around cones, taking and saving penalties, lifting weights, and doing press-ups and sit-ups. The scope of the games is fairly limited, but the implimentation is pleasant and playable, and the package represents the best value for money in a football game.

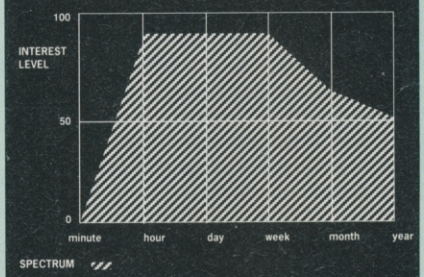
SPECTRUM VERSION

The graphics are fine and the gameplay is good. Though none of the games are on a par with Matchday II, it is good for the price.

GRAPHICS	7	IQ FACTOR	4
AUDIO	3	FUN FACTOR	8

ACE RATING 856

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Three solid soccer games with training prog as well represents good value for money.

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II

D & H Games move in a familiar direction

STARTING humbly on the Spectrum (why is the Spectrum always humble?) *Football Director* fast became the world and his female progenitor's favourite soccer management game. *Football Director II* proves that you really can't get too much of a good thing, and stone me if it isn't better than its prequel. Now available in Atari and Amiga versions, *FDII* is still an unexpected hit. I've tried to analyse its appeal, but I can't see it myself. It does have a level of complexity that some people find stimulating (is this starting to sound like a Molson advert?) and is enlivened by containing the names and attributes of current league players. There is a support group (I'm serious!) for players interested in playing other *Football Director* fans in leagues and cups, which is incredible. Can you think of any other game where this has happened? Okay, so what? What you want to know is if it's any cop.

Well, even I, a hardened anti-strategist, found the content of the game appealing, and as long as you're into footy and dictator games, an odd combo, you'll love it.

FDII on the ST – will Rochdale equalise before the final whistle goes?

RELEASE BOX		
SPEC 128	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
AMSTRAD	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£19.99dk	OUT NOW

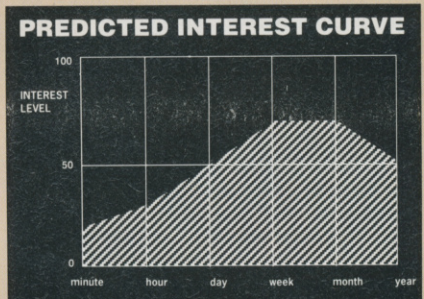
ST VERSION

Like the other versions it's in Basic and it's fairly slow, but then if you're a strategy fan that won't bug you unduly. The effect of the game is still curiously addictive.

GRAPHICS	2	IQ FACTOR	8
AUDIO	2	FUN FACTOR	7

ACE RATING 606

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



In-depth strategy game based on managing a team. Hard work but addictive with it.

MICROPROSE SOCCER

A Sensible soccer game from Microprose

915 ACE RATED

After peddling a half-finished game around a variety of potential publishers, the Sensible Software defence (namely Jonathon Hare, Chris Yates and new boy Martin Galway) finally signed up with major league team, Microprose (the one with the red, white and blue strip).

This footy package contains a normal eleven-a-side game, plus a version of American rules indoor six-a-side. Both varieties are displayed using an overhead viewpoint in much the same vein as the popular arcade machine - the name of which no-one at ACE can actually recall at this moment...

Where this scores over many other soccer progs is in the range of opportunities for varied play, both on the pitch and off. These include a number of different shots (lobs, banana shots, back kicks), loads of options to fiddle with, and a whole wealth of events in which to participate, such as the Microprose International Challenge, World Cup Tournament and a Soccer League, with up to 16 human players - the more the merrier.

Gameplay is dead smooth and the package as a whole makes an extremely attractive proposition - especially for solo armchair players, who normally have to call rent-a-friend to have anything like a decent game.

Microprose Soccer seems to come in a bit steep at £15 for the C64 cassette, but if it's value you're after, this leaves the competition back in the changing room.

C64 – nice overhead view again, and plenty of playability too!

RELEASE BOX			
C64/128	£14.95cs	£19.95dk	OUT NOW
SPEC 128	TBA		Feb 89
ATARI ST	TBA		Feb 89
AMIGA	TBA		Feb 89
AMSTRAD	TBA		Feb 89
IBM PC	TBA		Feb 89

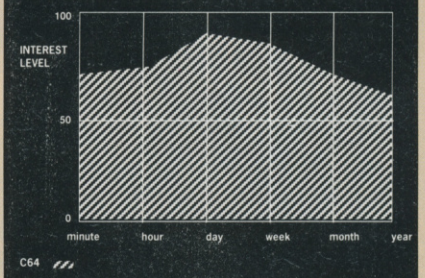
C64 VERSION

Extremely playable and visually appealing, with plenty of variety.

GRAPHICS	9	IQ FACTOR	7
AUDIO	5	FUN FACTOR	8

ACE RATING 915

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



One of the best footy sims available for C64.

HOTBALL

SATORY gives good French

HAW hee haw, yet another French game from the Satory/Coktel Vision label, this time just a straight forward one-a-side soccer match... no, that's not a misprunt, I said ONE-a-side two player football match.

To be fair, it can be TWO-a-side and four player using the dongle/twin joystick interface plugged into the parallel port, and that at least sets it above the crowd. Interesting idea, making a dongle out of the interface you need to play the game... although the interface bit is itself a touch on the erratic side. Trying to select the options on the initial screen is sometimes impossible, as the cursor insists that you are pushing the joystick to the right, when you aren't even touching the stick.

The viewpoint on this one is straight down onto the pitch, and the way you move the players is at first confusing. It's a bit like moving a tank, pushing forward to go forward, knocking the stick to the left and right to turn and pulling back to stop. If you push forward and let go of the stick, your player will plough on until he hits an obstacle. This is a terrible way to have to play a football game - in my experience you need to be able at least to turn round without having to go via Iceland because the turning circle of your player is bigger than that of a truck! Like most things, you can get used to this way of playing, but it would have been nice not to have to. Again the dicky joystick control played havoc with my player, sending him running towards my goal despite my best efforts to persuade him otherwise. In spite of this, when it actually works, it can provide some good entertainment.

ST – it's got a nice overhead view, but that doesn't really help the game's lack of playability.

RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	£24.95dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£24.95dk	IMMINENT

ST VERSION

It's not a bad game, and deserves a look, despite the erratic dongle/interface which has some strange effects on player control. Try before you buy, though.

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	7
AUDIO	7	FUN FACTOR	8

ACE RATING 535

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE

Fiddly football game with four player facility and a handy joystick port.

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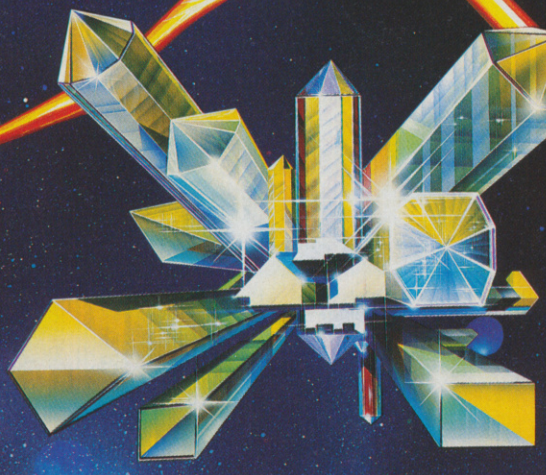

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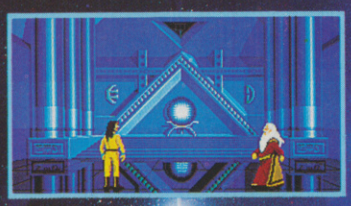

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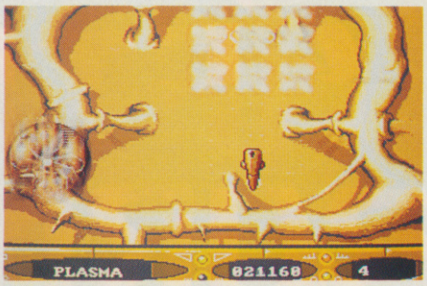
Blasting away on Level One - shoot that symbol to cycle through the weapons.

Level Two – now you've got ground installations to contend with too!



Destroying the guardians at the end of Level Two.

PHANTOM FIGHTER

EMERALD and MARTECH with a ghostly game

PICK a shoot-em-up, any shoot-em-up (shuffle it and put it back?) and more likely than not it'll feature either horizontal or vertical scrolling. Emerald Software, courtesy of Martech, have launched themselves into the Amiga market with a shoot-em-up called *Phantom Fighter* that combines the two styles.

The reason this time for hopping into a heavily-armed spacecraft? Well, there's a world to save for starters and your soul to save for seconds – what more reason do you need?

The first level of the game is horizontally-scrolling. The player controls a small on-screen spacecraft and has to dodge and shoot wave after wave of attacking aliens. Destroy a whole wave and the aliens leave either a 200 point bonus or an extra weapon symbol. Shoot the symbol before picking it up and it cycles through the available extras which include: extra speed, to help you avoid the aliens and their bullets; sideways-firing weapons; and homing missiles. Once collected, the extra weapons remain until you either die or collect another weapon. Some weapons can be far more useful than others: for example, the homing missiles are not very effective against end-of-level guardians and ground installations but they are against most flying nasties. It's sometimes very annoying to have to give up your porky Plasma system (complete with sideways firing) for the decidedly less sexy sideways-firing system.

The levels aren't very long so you soon come across the guardians (the early ones resemble the innards of alarm clocks) which have to be destroyed before the next level loads in. Now you're in a vertically-scrolling game complete with ground targets that also fire at you. Survive the level and it's horizontal time again. Beginning to get the picture?

As you'd expect, the levels get progressively harder. The aliens get more numerous, faster and start attacking in multiple waves. Like most shoot-em-ups of this type, the aliens stick to certain patterns when they come at you, but unlike most shoot-em-ups the attack patterns are very complicated and it won't take long to realise that there is no safe place to hide on the screen.

Phantom Fighter is a good shoot-em-up, with horizontal levels that are ever-so-slightly like *Menace* and vertical levels ever-so-slightly like *Sidewinder*. It's tough and challenging, but ultimately lacking in depth. A nice debut for Emerald, so let's hope their next game looks as good and plays as well but shows a touch more originality.

● Andy Smith

AMIGA VERSION

Great graphics (the shimmering and partly-animated backgrounds especially), great gameplay and tough aliens – what more do you need in a shoot-em-up?

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	1
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	7

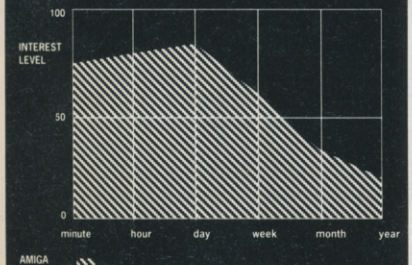
ACE RATING 729

(Right) Polishing off the last wave of aliens on Level Three before the end of level guardian appears.

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST		POSSIBLE
AMIGA	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£24.99dk	IMMINENT

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



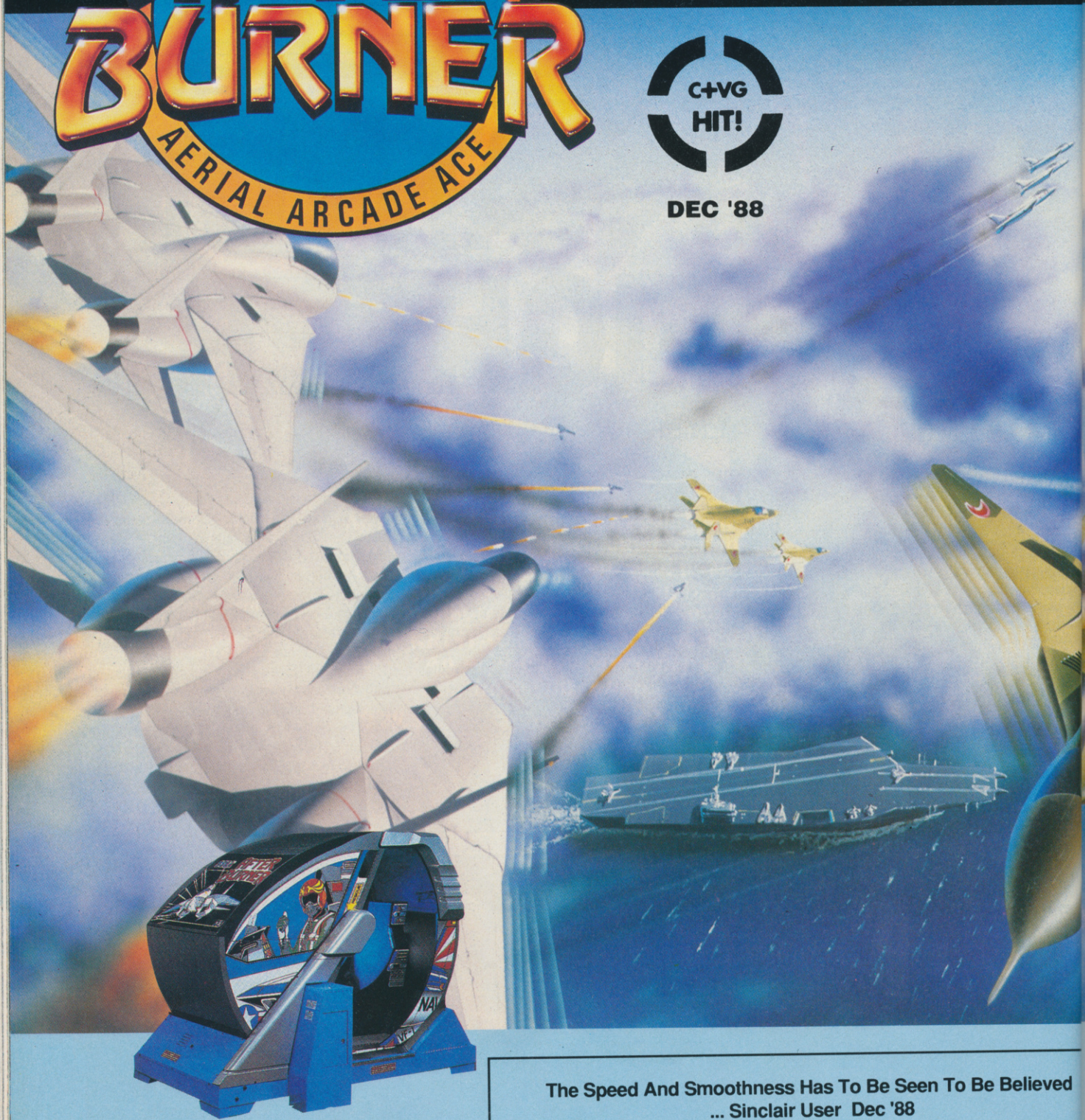
Challenging and playable shoot-em-up, but in the end it's standard arcade fare.

SHAKE. A

F-14 AFTER BURNER AERIAL ARCADE ACE

C+VG HIT!

DEC '88



The Speed And Smoothness Has To Be Seen To Be Believed
... Sinclair User Dec '88

ACTIVISION

SEGA®

AFTERBURNER – THE ARCA NSA

Afterburner™ Sega© are trademarks of Sega Enterprises Ltd. Game has been manufactured under license from Sega Enterprises Ltd., Japan. Marketed and distributed by Activision. Mail Order: Activision, Blake House, Manor Farm Estate, Manor Farm Rd., Reading, Berkshire. Consumer Enquiries: 0734 311666 Technical Support: 0703 229694.

Available on C64 cassette (£9.99) and disk (£14.99), Spectrum (£1 mstrad ca
Amiga (£2 d MSX (£

.RATTLE. ROLL IT..

Amiga screen shots shown

ST screen shots shown

Believed

ARCADE SENSATION OF THE YEAR'

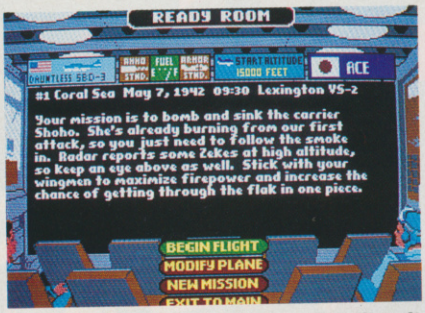
AFTERBURNER – You've played the arcade **smash** – now **experience** the white-knuckled **realism** of a supersonic **dogfight** at home! Using your heat-seeking **missiles** and laser anti-aircraft **fire,** can you be **top gun** against a seething supersonic **swarm?**

Experience brain-numbing **G-forces;** bones **rattling** with the body-jarring **pitch** and yaw . . . **scan** with your **radar, lock on** your target and **FIRE!**

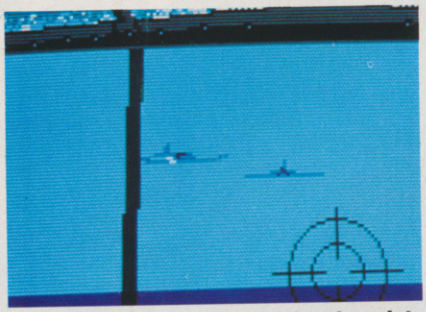
ectrum (£12.9 Amstrad cassette (£9.99) and disk (£14.99), Atari ST (£24.99),
Amiga (£24.9 and MSX (£9.99).

BATTLEHAW

US Gold takes LUCASFILM sky-high



The briefing room. This looks like it could be a tough mission with all those Zekes (Zeros) about.



Prepare to follow the other bombers into the dive. Luckily there's no sign of the Zekes yet....

Starting the dive. Another Dauntless has just dropped its bomb. Stay lined up on the carrier....

928 ACE RATED

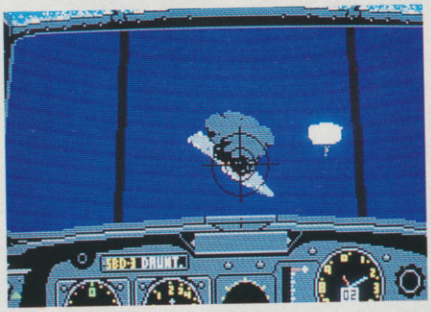
Spectrum Holobyte have dominated the PC flight-sim market with *Falcon*, and Electronic Arts have achieved similar dominance with *Interceptor* on the Amiga. Now Lucasfilm Games could easily upset the apple cart with *Battlehawks 1942*.

This WWII naval air combat simulation covers four of the most important battles of the 1942 Pacific war. The player can train to fly either American or Japanese planes of the period, and take part in up to 32 individual missions (four missions for each side in the four battles).

To start with, flying practice is important. Three types of plane are featured – fighter planes, dive bombers and torpedo planes. Training to be a fighter pilot, for either side, means learning how to fly and fight in a WWII propellor-driven aeroplane. Action with a dive-bombing squadron calls for skill in dropping bombs from the correct altitude while avoiding enemy fighters and flak - torpedo runs are similar, but take place at much lower altitudes.

The practice runs vary in difficulty. Runs may be made against sitting targets, moving

RELEASE BOX		
IBM PC	£19.99 dk	EASTER
OTHER VERSIONS TO BE ANNOUNCED		



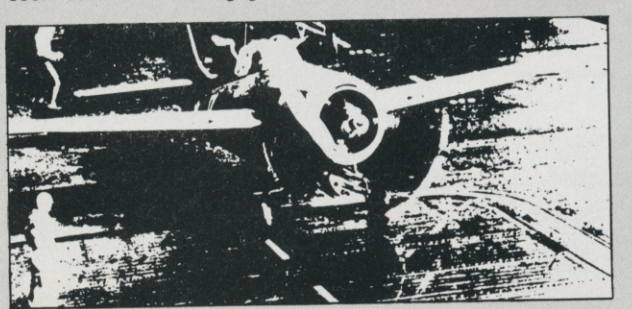
2,000 ft and it's time to release a bomb. Note the parachuting pilot who's just bailed out of his plane.

In replay mode, watch how well you performed during the mission, viewing from any angle or distance.

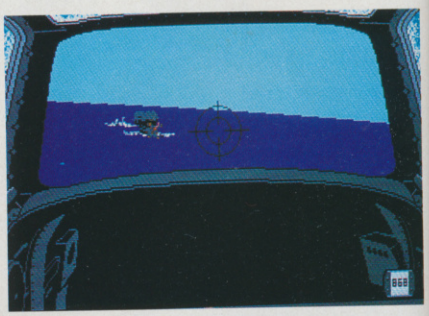
GRUMMAN F4F-3A AND F4F-4 "WILDCAT"

The F4F-3A fixed-wing carrier-based fighter was introduced in 1941 and first saw action against the Japanese in December of that year. The F4F-3A continued to be an active part of the American naval strike force and participated in numerous engagements in 1942 including the Battle of the Coral Sea. By the time of the Battle of Midway, the F4F-3A was superceded by the improved F4F-4.

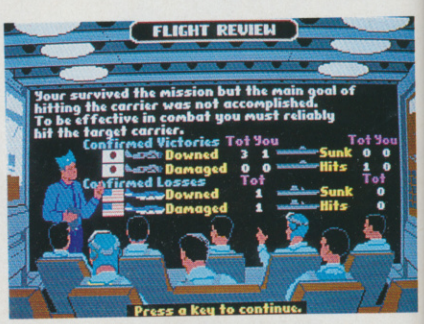
This version of the Wildcat had folding wings and two extra .50 calibre machine guns. Although the F4F-4 was no match for a Zero in a one-on-one dogfight, American pilots soon learnt to avoid dogfights and hit the weaker Zeros in pairs, where the superior firepower and armour of the F4F-4 proved to be a distinct advantage.



A US Navy F4F-4 Wildcat prepares to take off from a carrier. Picture courtesy of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum Library.



(Above) The rear gunner's view of the exploding ship. (Below) It is de-brief time back at base after the mission.



A WKS 1942

targets or moving and firing targets, some of which have fighter escorts to protect them. After learning how to handle the plane you can sign on for active service in one of the four scenarios: the Battle of the Coral Sea; the Battle of Midway; the Battle of the Eastern Solomons or the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands.

Several missions are available in each battle scenario. For example, in the Battle of the Coral Sea, flying as an American pilot, you can make a dive-bombing attack against the aircraft-carrier Shoho, or be a fighter pilot escorting the dive bombers. Alternatively, you can be a fighter pilot defending the American ships, Lexington and Yorktown, from Japanese dive-bomb attacks. Taking the role of a Japanese pilot in the Battle of the Coral Sea, you can elect to defend the carrier Shoho from American attack, fly a torpedo mission against the Lexington, or embark on a dive-bombing mission against the Yorktown.

Medals are awarded for exceptional performance, but only to American pilots – the Japanese did not go in for such things. Service records are constantly updated, but it's important to note that on active service the record is only updated when the plane is flown equipped as it would have been in reality...

(Below) In a Zero providing Carrier Air Protection. 20mm cannons can make short work of Wildcats if you can hit them, but ammunition is limited so use it sparingly.

unlimited supplies of ammunition don't lead to improvements in your service record!

Battlehawks is a tremendous combat sim, with none of the usual 'take off from the carrier, do the mission and land again' nonsense. Each scenario puts you right in the heart of the action. Using the mouse or a joystick is definitely recommended as the best means of controlling the plane - although it's not particularly tricky to master the controls, the sense of realism is greatly increased if you can fly the plane with one hand on the controller and use your other hand to switch between views. If you keep messing things up, it's a good idea to turn on the on-board camera so you can watch the action from outside the cockpit on replay and analyse just where you're making mistakes.

For knuckle-whitening action *Battlehawks* has everything - the sense of 'being there' is tremendous as you watch other members of your group go chasing enemy fighters, or start their bombing runs. Thrilling and surprisingly addictive stuff.

● Andy Smith

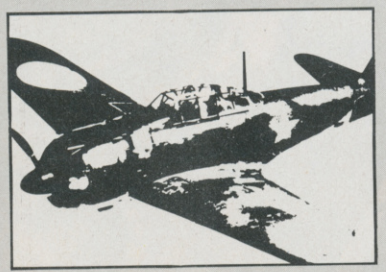
(Above) Two Japanese torpedo planes move in on the Lexington... and (Below) hit her. Your job was to protect her, so expect a stiff telling-off back at base.

(Below) Bingo! When those Wildcats blow, they really blow!

MITSUBISHI A6M2 TYPE 0 MODEL 21 ZERO

The carrier-based Zero or 'Zeke' as it was known to the Americans could out-fly and out-manoeuvre any US fighter during the first two years of the war. In the hands of an experienced pilot it was like a hawk among flocks of geese. Designed specifically for carrier operations, a 1' 8" section of each wingtip folded up allowing the Model 21 to fit inside deck elevators. In combat the Zero was especially suited to bomber protection, carrier defence and strafing ground installations.

Just before the last major carrier battle in the Pacific in 1942, the Model 21 was updated into the Model 32. This was a faster plane with a larger and more powerful engine. However the extra speed was offset by the reduced fuel-tank capacity and the consequent reduction in range. Though both the M21 and M32 were faster and more agile than their US counterparts, they lacked armour and firepower. One of their major drawbacks was the lack of a self-sealing fuel tank, which led to many M32 fireballs when a hit was taken in the tank...



A captured Zero (note the star on the fuselage) being flown for evaluation. Picture courtesy of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum Library.

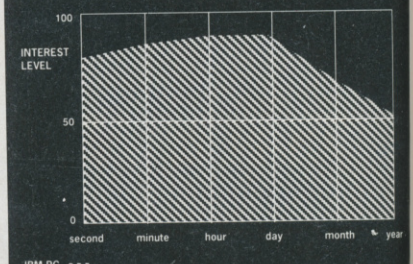
PC VERSION

In EGA, the graphics are great – although the screen display is a bit slow and jerky, once you're in the thick of the action you hardly notice it. The dogfighting action is gripping, the different missions are absorbing and the variety of skill levels keeps play challenging.

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	5
AUDIO	5	FUN FACTOR	9

ACE RATING 928

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE

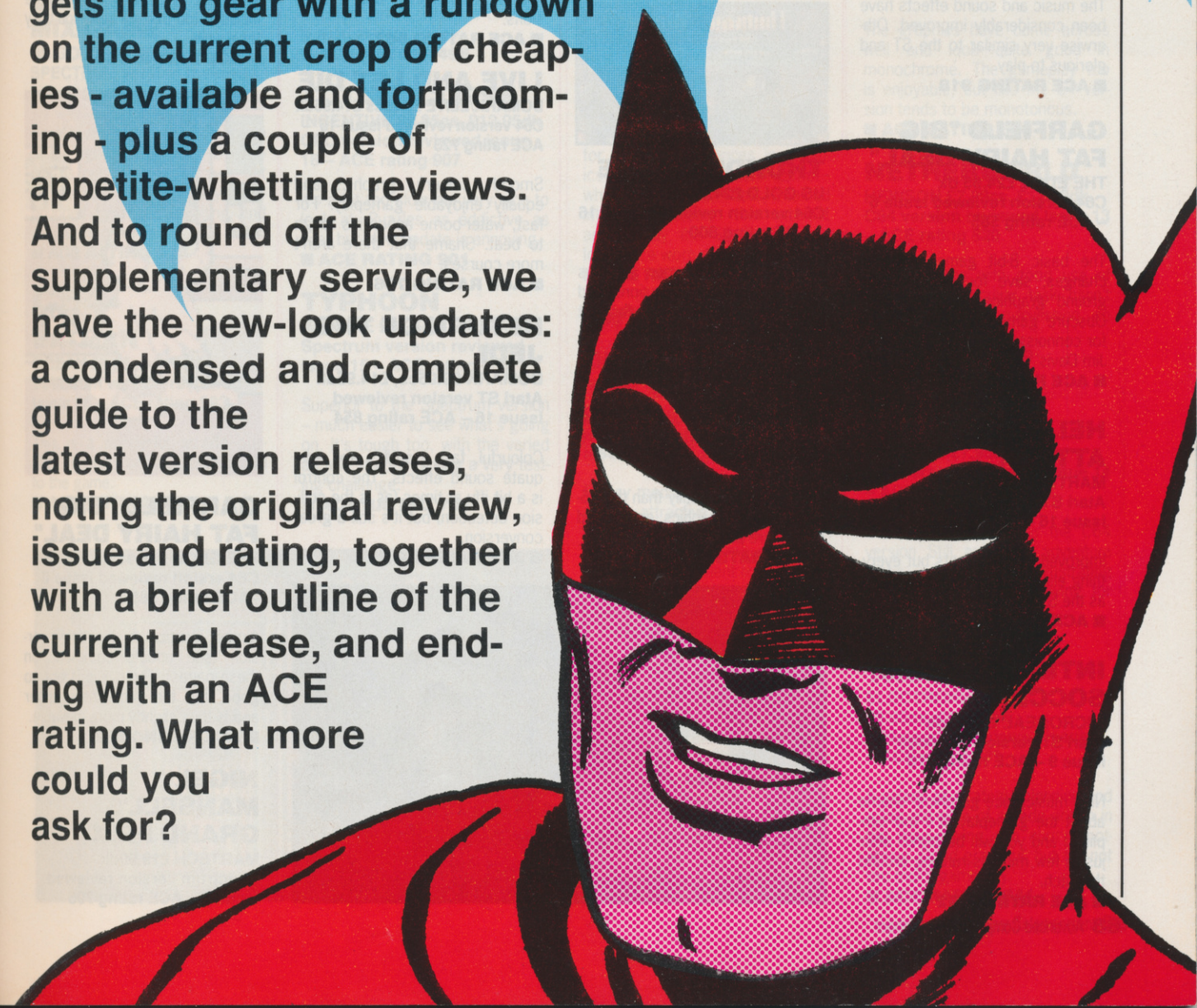


The action starts straight away and keeps on going.

SCREEN TEST SUPPLEMENT

Another ACE Screen Test Supplement: Number Two in an infinite series...

And what delights lie in wait on the following pages? Tricks 'N' Tactics goes from strength to strength, crammed full with readers' tips on how to play (or cheat at) Elite, Garfield, Operation Wolf, Virus and - oh, the list just goes on and on. ACE's regular budget round-up gets into gear with a rundown on the current crop of cheapies - available and forthcoming - plus a couple of appetite-whetting reviews. And to round off the supplementary service, we have the new-look updates: a condensed and complete guide to the latest version releases, noting the original review, issue and rating, together with a brief outline of the current release, and ending with an ACE rating. What more could you ask for?



UPDATES: AN AT-

Versions of previously-released titles arrived thick and fast in the closing weeks of 1988 – so we clear the decks a little with a whistle-stop tour, machine by machine.

AMIGA

CAPTAIN BLOOD
INFOGRAMES £24.95 dk
Atari ST version reviewed issue 7 – ACE rating 887

The mould-breaking French arcade adventure looks just as good as it did on the ST. Thankfully, the attractive but overlong graphic sequences can now be cut short, making this version even more playable than its predecessor.
■ **ACE RATING 890**

ELITE
FIREBIRD £24.95dk
Atari ST version reviewed issue 14 – ACE rating 907

The music and sound effects have been considerably improved. Otherwise very similar to the ST and glorious to play.
■ **ACE RATING 918**

GARFIELD "BIG FAT HAIRY DEAL"
THE EDGE £24.95 dk
C64 version reviewed issue 6 – ACE rating 585

The basic 8-bit game with few changes, save for clearer background graphics and animation. Obscure gameplay makes it one for connoisseurs of the genre – or Jim Davis' cat character.
■ **ACE RATING 554**

HELLFIRE ATTACK
MARTECH £19.99dk
Atari ST version reviewed issue 16 – ACE rating 554

Improved sound effects but everything else is as dull and unexciting as the ST version.
■ **ACE RATING 472**

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER
MICRODEAL £19.95dk
Atari ST version reviewed issue 9 – ACE rating 576

Nice music, nice graphics, shame about the gameplay. It's too simplified and you will be bored after just a few minutes running around the pitch.
■ **ACE RATING 482**

OUT RUN
US GOLD £24.99dk
Atari ST version reviewed issue 10 – ACE rating 873

As good as the ST version and the music sounds better. Rather old hat these days though.
■ **ACE RATING 822**

SPIDERTRONIC
INFOGRAMES £19.95dk
Atari ST version reviewed issue 9 – ACE rating 903

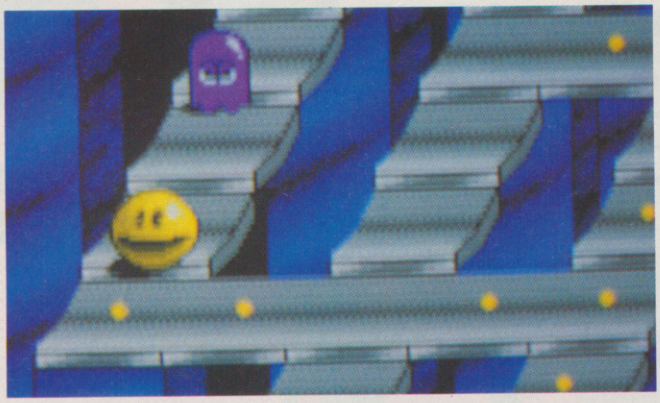
Same weird action as on the ST. The effects have been tarted up a bit, but little else has changed.
■ **ACE RATING 903**

THUNDERBLADE
US GOLD £24.99dk
C64 version reviewed issue 16 – ACE rating 800

Looks absolutely super and has lots of smashing explosions and effects. Everything moves fast but it is a tad difficult.
■ **ACE RATING 835**

PACMANIA
GRAND SLAM £9.95cs, £14.95dk
Amiga version reviewed issue 16 – ACE rating 775

Plays more maniacally than the 16-bit versions. Graphics and sound effects are pretty hoopy too.
■ **ACE RATING 720**



AMSTRAD

GUERRILLA WAR
IMAGINE £9.95cs, £14.95dk
Spectrum version reviewed isue 16 – ACE rating 704

Much more colourful than the Spectrum version, but the scrolling is jerky and the gameplay is poor. Not one of Imagine's best conversions.
■ **ACE RATING 567**

LIVE AND LET DIE
DOMARK/ELITE £9.95cs £14.95dk
C64 version reviewed issue 16 – ACE rating 723

Smooth, colourful graphics and equally enjoyable gameplay. For fast, water-borne action it's tough to beat. Shame that there aren't more courses.
■ **ACE RATING 786**

RETURN OF THE JEDI
DOMARK £9.95cs, £14.95dk
Atari ST version reviewed issue 16 – ACE rating 854

Colourful, fast graphics and adequate sound effects. The control is a bit iffy at times (as is the collision detection) but it's still a great conversion.
■ **ACE RATING 816**

ATARI ST

FIREZONE
PSS £24.99 dk
Amstrad version reviewed issue 8 – ACE rating 710

A nicely-presented, simple wargame that gives you some tough computer opponents to contend with. There is a game design feature included too that will keep you busy for a while.
■ **ACE RATING 734**

GARFIELD "BIG FAT HAIRY DEAL"
THE EDGE £19.95 dk
C64 ersion reviewed issue 6 –ACE rating 585

Almost identical to the Amiga version (see update comment on these pages). The music is not so good, but the game runs faster and is thus slightly more playable.
■ **ACE RATING 562**

NIGEL MANSELL'S GRAND PRIX
MARTECH £19.99dk
Spectrum version reviewed issue 7 – ACE rating 795

AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE

Horrendous crash sequence, accompanied by dreadful sound effect. Doesn't do the ST justice at all, in terms of graphics or gameplay.
■ **ACE RATING 421**

SORCEROR LORD
PSS £24.99dk
Spectrum version reviewed issue 6 – ACE rating 844
Amstrad version reviewed issue 6 – ACE rating 838

An absorbing and very enjoyable fantasy wargame that's not easy to beat. The graphics, of course, have been substantially improved.
■ **ACE RATING 864**

THE PEPSI CHALLENGE MAD MIX GAME
US GOLD £14.99dk
SPECTRUM version reviewed issue 15 – ACE rating 524

PacMan returns in a pale imitation of the aged original. The ST version is reasonably attractive, but suffers from poor playability, compounded by ropey scrolling and insensitive controls.
■ **ACE RATING 478**

C64

BATMAN
OCEAN £9.95cs £14.95
Spectrum version reviewed issue 16 – ACE rating 903

This is a wonderful arcade puzzler. The 64's better graphics add to the game.
■ **ACE RATING 913**

BUBBLE GHOST
ERE £9.95cs £14.95dk
Atari ST version reviewed issue 4 – ACE rating 814

This highly original and addictive puzzle game finally makes it onto the 64, and it's just as much fun as the other versions.
■ **ACE RATING 814**

THE PEPSI CHALLENGE MAD MIX GAME
US GOLD £7.99cs £11.99dk
SPECTRUM version reviewed issue 15 – ACE rating 524

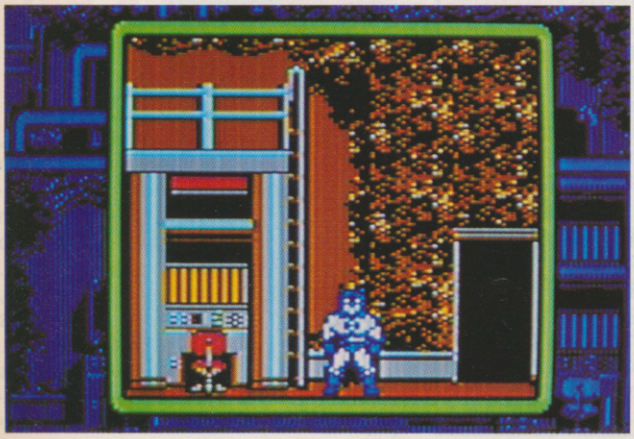
Comparable to other formats (see ST update on these pages). No outstanding features to this limp *PacMan* variant, which is extremely average fare.
■ **ACE RATING 496**

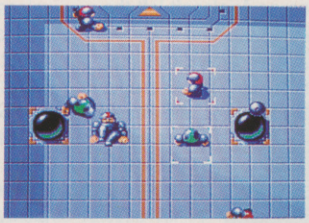
TOTAL ECLIPSE
INCENTIVE £9.95cs, £12.95dk
CPC version reviewed issue 16 – ACE rating 907

It's a bit too slow but very nice to look at. Puzzles as addictive as ever but slow update is annoying.
■ **ACE RATING 901**

TYPHOON
IMAGINE £8.95cs, £12.95dk
Spectrum version reviewed issue 15 – ACE rating 654

Superior to the Spectrum version – much easier to see what's going on. It's tough too, with the varied arcade stages making a very testing challenge.
■ **ACE RATING 704**





SPEEDBALL
IMAGEWORKS £24.99dk
Atari ST version reviewed issue 14 – ACE rating 834

A display that fills the screen and beefed-up sound effects make this superior to the ST version. Every bit as addictive to play in one or two player mode.
■ **ACE RATING 874**

STAR TREK
FIREBIRD £9.95cs £14.95dk
ATARI ST Vversion reviewed issue 5 – ACE rating 764

Delayed beyond belief, the C64 *Star Trek* finally arrives, and save for obvious differences in graphics and sound, the main game – what little there is - has remained intact. However, the interest aroused by the ST version has long since worn off.
■ **ACE RATING 648**

PC

DEFENDER OF THE CROWN
CINEMAWARE £29.99dk
ATARI ST version reviewed issue 6 – ACE rating 826

Classy mediaeval strategy/arcade game, attractive in EGA, but it comes off quite badly in CGA mode. The lack of mouse control is a severe detriment to the action sequences which are left to joystick or cursor keys. Expensive and all...
■ **ACE RATING 567**

STAR TREK
FIREBIRD £24.95
ATARI ST version reviewed issue 5 – ACE rating 764

As with the C64 version, gameplay remains more or less unchanged. Sound, though, is very poor, and CGA graphics most unsatisfactory.
■ **ACE RATING 623**

SPECTRUM

HELLFIRE ATTACK
MARTECH £8.99cs £14.99dk
Atari ST version reviewed issue 16 – ACE rating 554

It's multi-load even in 128K mode. The graphics are nothing special and the way the display suddenly inverts is very off-putting. It's a poor *Afterburner* variant that won't get you excited.
■ **ACE RATING 337**

INTENSITY
FIREBIRD £7.95cs, £12.95dk
C64 version reviewed issue 14 – ACE rating 642

The graphics have come across well and look quite good in monochrome. The gameplay too is enjoyable, but like the 64 version tends to be monotonous.
■ **ACE RATING 636**

NETHERWORLD
HEWSON £7.99cs, £12.99dk
C64 version reviewed issue 13 – ACE rating 820

Nice graphics with good use of colour. The peculiar task hasn't changed at all in conversion, so it's just as enjoyable.
■ **ACE RATING 810**

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE
FIREBIRD £7.95cs
C64 version reviewed issue 14 – ACE rating 719

Completely different to the C64 version. Still, an arcade adventure that's addictive and frustrating enough to keep you playing for some time.
■ **ACE RATING 744**

THE TRAIN
ELECTRONIC ARTS
£8.95cs, £14.95dk
C64 version reviewed issue 7 – ACE rating 641

A splash of strategic planning and a fair old slice of arcade action in this train-driving sim cum shoot-em-up. Good graphics, but still not too much gameplay.
■ **ACE RATING 641**

CHEAP 'N' CHEERFUL

● ATLANTIS
The latest Atlantis releases include *Tank Command* and *Gunfighter* (both Spectrum: £1.99) by the author of *Cerius*. Amstrad owners are also catered for with *Space Trader* (£2.99) – an *Elite*-style trading game that lacks the 3D graphics.

● MANDARIN
No – Mandarin don't have a budget label just yet. But they are currently mulling over the idea of setting one up to release games written using *STOS*, their ST game designer. If anyone out there is interested, drop Chris Payne a line at: Mandarin Software, Europa House, Adlington Park, Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 4NP. Further details of the *STOS* system are due to appear in a forthcoming feature...

● KIXX
US Gold's budget label continues its re-release theme with *Bravestar*, *World Games*, *Way of the Tiger*, *Rygar* and *Super Cycle* across all 8-bit formats for a mere £2.99.

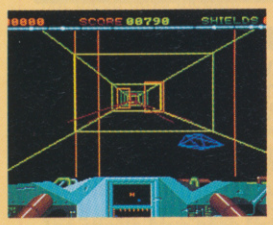
Meanwhile, Spanish software house Toposoft (responsible for the Pepsi Challenge game, *Mad Mix*) have been signed up to produce Kixx's first original games, *Blackbeard* and *Colosseum*.

● MASTERTRONIC
As usual, this Virgin subsidiary has a pretty big £1.99 catalogue, although the bulk of it comprises re-releases. Plans are apparently afoot to increase the proportion of original titles, with two original games due to appear soon: *Nonamed* (Spec, Ams) and *Reveal* (Spec, C64 and Ams).

Re-releases include *How to be a Complete Bastard* (Spec, C64 and Ams), *Hacker* (Spec and Ams), *Rebel* (Spec and C64), *Rock 'n' Bolt* (C64), *Dan Dare II* (Spec, C64 and Ams), *Transformers* (C64) and, believe it or not, *Manic Miner* (C64, Spec).

One interesting release is *Werewolves of London* (Spec, C64 and Ams). This full-price Ariolasoft game was demoed on the cover of a magazine, but wasn't released commercially because Ariolasoft left the UK market.

Mastertronic continue their 16-bit £14.99 products with *Chase* (ST and Amiga), plus *Shard of Inovar* and *Gyrex* (a *Gyruss* variant) for the PC.



ST – Mastertronic's *Chase*

● CODEMASTERS
More original games from the Darling Codemasters' camp. *Ghost Hunters* is the C64 version of the Oliver twins' tepid Amstrad platform game; *Ninja Massacre* appears on the Spectrum, while *Super Stunt Man* makes his debut on the C64. The popular Amstrad game *Dizzy* returns in *Treasure Island Dizzy*, while BMX bikes get their pedals oiled and another lease of life in *BMX Freestyle Simulator*.

CPC – *Treasure Island Dizzy*

In a recent move, Codemasters have made £2.99 their starting price for budget titles – so expect to pay a little extra from now on.

● PLAYERS
More re-releases on the Players front, with the old Arcana trivia game *Powerplay*, and *Eagles Nest* from Players' parent company Pandora. Both good games at £1.99 for Ams, Spec and C64. Completing the £1.99 line-up is a Spectrum-only product called *Tomcat* – a vertically-scrolling shoot-em-up with little to commend it.

● SILVERBIRD
Also getting onto the re-release bandwagon, Silverbird (all titles £1.99) are about to release *Cauldron II* (Spec, C64), followed up by *The Sacred Armour of Antiriad* (Spec, C64 and Ams) in the New Year.

Telecomsoft also have plenty of new titles coming through, the first of which is *Pasteman Pat* (Spec, C64, Ams and MSX). Hard on Pat's heels should be *Motorcross Mania* and *Street Warrior* for the C64, *International Speedway* (Spec, C64 and Ams) to be followed by *Night Gunner* (Spec and Ams).

Silverbird also have the cheek to release *Video Classics* for the Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad. Featuring such wonders as tennis, squash and football – remember them?

Tarting up 16-year-old (at least) game concepts and passing them off under the guise of 'classics' is hardly cricket.

● AXXIOM
Microprose's new label, Axxiom, handles original and re-release 16-bit games at a regular budget price of £14.99 – initially for the ST and Amiga. Their product line-up is currently dominated by Amiga games and includes *Crystal Hammer* (an *Arkanoid* variant) on ST and Amiga, and an oriental beat-em-up *Way of the Little Dragon* as the first pair of original releases.

On the re-release front, Axxiom's line-up is based around a number of old German games which saw the light of day, squinted briefly and returned to the cover of darkness. *Mission Elevator* has been seen previously on 8-bit machines; then there's *Final Mission*, an extremely lame *Gilligan's Gold*-style platform game, while *Spaceport* is simply a 16-bit rendition of the old Synsoft classic *Fort Apocalypse*.

BUD G

The first incarnation of our regu

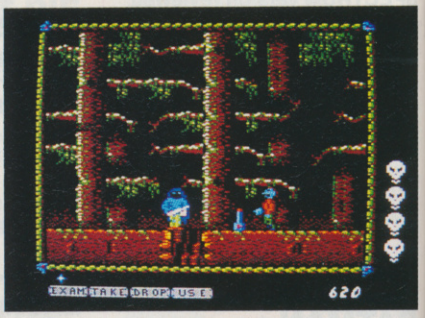
DEATH STALKER

Codemasters
Spectrum, Amstrad: £2.99

Conspicuous by the lack of any 'Simulator' tag, Codemasters' *Death Stalker* is an arcade adventure with a heavy scent of fantasy. The main character – a sorcerer with violent tendencies – is guided around the earthy rural landscape, on a mission to discover the lost key of darkness and in so doing, he descends into the 'Deeper Dungeons'.

En route, potions and items are collected as the solution to later puzzles, prisoners are rescued from their bondage and attacking members of the undead are despatched by nifty sword play.

Sections of the landscape appear only in proximity to the main character, and so the route gradually unfolds as progress is made. Gameplay is a little slower that it might have been, and the combat is pretty pallid stuff, but there's still a definite urge to explore.



Both Amstrad and Spectrum versions are reasonably colourful and should help while away an hour or two.

■ ACE RATING 624

PETER PACK RAT

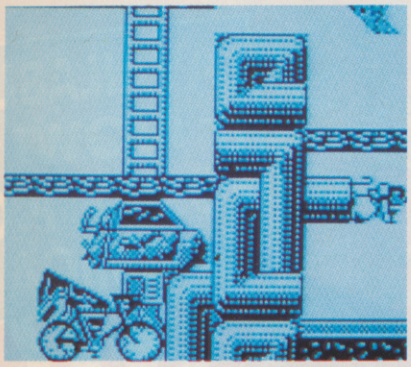
Silverbird
Amstrad, C64 and Spectrum: £1.99

Based on the Atari coin-op of the same name, *Peter Pack Rat* is a jolly little collect-em-up where the tubby rodent is charged with collecting goodies and taking them back to his den within a time limit. The junkyard-style backdrop is littered with obstacles, including ladders, pipes and slides which Pete has to negotiate, and is also home to a selection of creatures intent upon interfering with the hero's progress.

While the Amstrad and Spectrum versions are identical, with a detailed monochrome display, the C64 profits from a multicolour back-

GET BONANZA

regular slot for budget games arrives in the SCREEN TEST Supplement.



Spectrum – Could that be a Mountain Bike in the junkyard?

drop and smoother and faster gameplay. Amstrad and Sinclair users might think twice about the puchase, but 64 owners should enjoy the action on offer.

ACE RATING 695

MUTANT ZONE

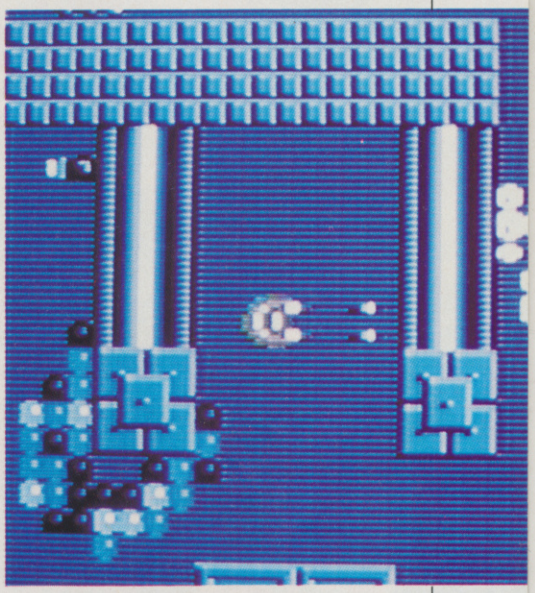
Mastertronic

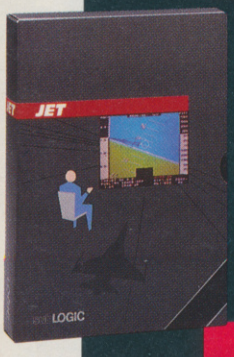
C64, Spectrum imminent: £1.99

Mutant Zone bears more than a passing resemblance to an earlier Mastertronic release for the C64 (and latterly Spectrum), called *Spore*. This is not necessarily a bad thing though, since *Spore* was, and still is, a very good budget game. *Mutant Zone* contains most of the features of its predecessor (regenerating lifeforms, destructible blocks and switchable walls) plus transporters, extra weapons, energy recharging points and collectable objects.

The subtle blend of strategy and blasting is both thought-provoking and adrenalin-pumping at the same time: sharp graphics, testing gameplay and decent sound effects make for a very polished and entertaining purchase.

ACE RATING 624





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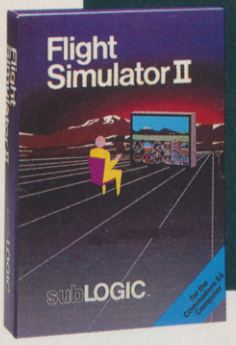

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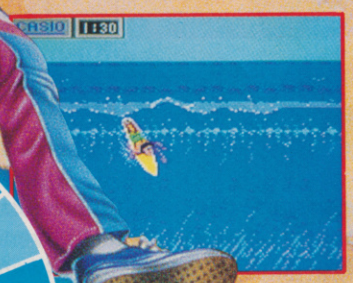

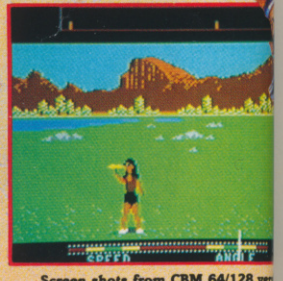

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Screen shots from CBM 64/128 ver

T'N'T's offerings have a distinctly ST flavour about them this month, which is great for Atari owners, but not so hot for everyone else. Remember, there's no reason why the owner of an 8-bit machine shouldn't pick up the Top Tip prize...

This issue, together with the map and complete solution for GARFIELD, we have the ultimate cheat for ST ELITE and listings for both the ST and Spectrum versions of FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II – among many others.

NEBULUS

■ John Phillips' maddeningly addictive platform game can get a little bit tough with only three Pogos to play with. In order to make life a little easier on the Amiga and ST versions, select the required mission and then type 'HELLOIAMJMP' on the title screen. Not only does Pogo have unlimited incarnations, but pressing f1 through f8 accesses the unfinished towers on that mission.

■ John Phillips

SAVAGE

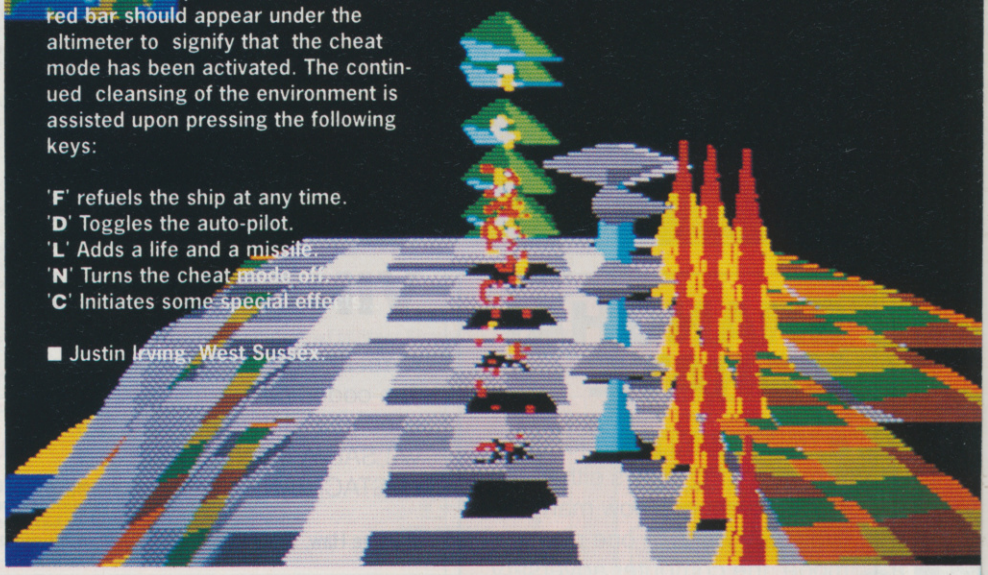
The attractive multi-loader from Probe on the Spectrum is split into three sections, and the access code for the last is FERGUS – presumably because Probe's head honcho is Fergus McGovern (whose initials also appear on the *Out Run* Testarossa, by the way).

VIRUS

Owners of the Atari ST imitation of the Archimedes demo – er... game, sorry – may be interested to hear of a cheat mode. Hold down ENTER, and press 'P' and '0'. When the ship becomes airborne, a red bar should appear under the altimeter to signify that the cheat mode has been activated. The continued cleansing of the environment is assisted upon pressing the following keys:

'F' refuels the ship at any time.
'D' Toggles the auto-pilot.
'L' Adds a life and a missile.
'N' Turns the cheat mode off.
'C' Initiates some special effects.

■ Justin Irving, West Sussex



SORCERY PLUS

■ The aged Amstrad game recently surfaced for Atari ST, so here, courtesy of an anonymous tipster, are some hints to ease the pain of being an apprentice sorceror.

Some of the solid-looking pillars can actually be flown through.

The Green Monster is killed by the sharp axe; the Ground Goblin with the strong sword; and the Flying Eye, Pig and Pumpkin are all destroyed using the ball and chain.

Cauldrons on the ground replenish or deplete energy, and vary from game to game. Sanctuary always replenishes energy.

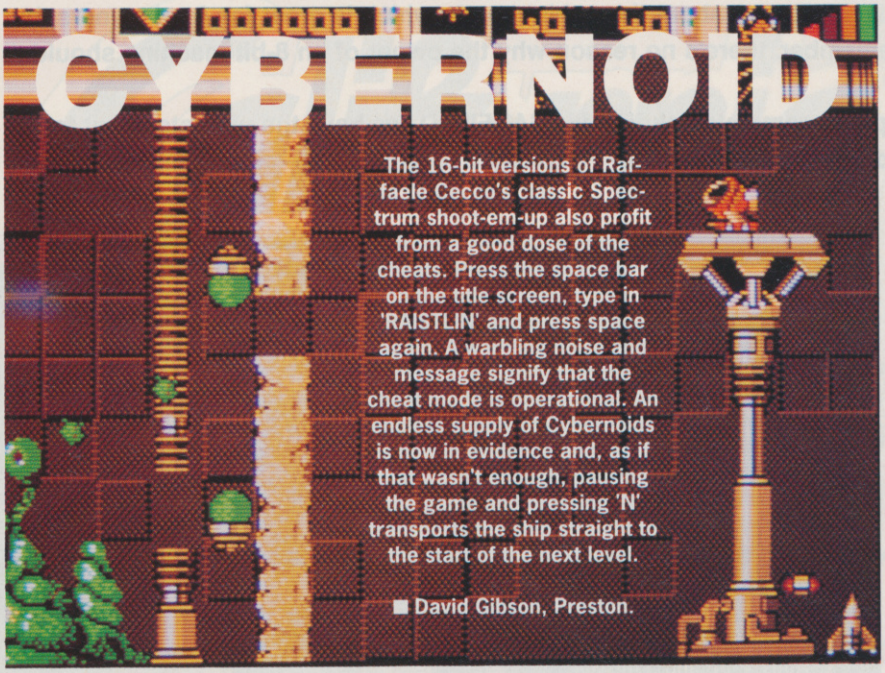
Fleurs de Lys and Coats of Arms permanently unlock doors bearing those symbols, and are not used up in the process.

Bottles and keys open the remaining doors but are consumed in doing so.

The objects required to liberate the corresponding Sorcerers are outlined below:

OBJECT	SORCERER LOCATION
Sorcerer's Moon	Stonehenge
Wand	Tunnel
Book	Outer Sanctum
Golden Chalice	Wine Cellar
Goblet of Wine	Wastelands
Little Lyre	Palace
Crown	Strongroom
Scroll	Dungeon

There are often two or more of each item so if one is difficult to reach, it's worth having a look for another. The book is hardest to get (near the waterfall) so it's worth attempting to retrieve this first. Once all the Sorcerers are free, go to Sanctuary and sit on the remaining pillar to complete the game.



CYBERNOID

The 16-bit versions of Raffaele Cecco's classic Spectrum shoot-em-up also profit from a good dose of the cheats. Press the space bar on the title screen, type in 'RAISTLIN' and press space again. A warbling noise and message signify that the cheat mode is operational. An endless supply of Cybernoids is now in evidence and, as if that wasn't enough, pausing the game and pressing 'N' transports the ship straight to the start of the next level.

■ David Gibson, Preston.

OPERATION WOLF

■ Ocean's great conversion of the popular Uzi-bearing shoot 'em up is just ripe for a swift POKE in the code. Load the cassette version and reset the C64 using the appropriate cartridge or paper clip. Type in the listing below and RUN it for infinite grenades, bullets and energy, thus making the mission a sure-fire success.

```
10 DATA 104, 173, 32, 208, 96, 169, 128,
133, 157, 32
20 DATA 86, 245, 162, 32, 160, 0, 142, 84,
3, 140
30 DATA 85, 3, 96, 72, 169, 173, 141, 35,
137, 169
40 DATA 165, 141, 136, 136, 141, 169, 140,
76, 52, 3
50 FOR A=820 TO 824: READ B: X=X+B:
POKE A, B: NEXT
60 FOR I=53230 TO 53264: READ A: X=X+A:
POKE I, A: NEXT
70 IF X=4525 THEN SYS 53230
80 PRINT "ERROR IN DATA"
```

■ The Master Hacker

SHANGHAI KARATE

■ The following listing for the Amstrad CPC allows either player to choose how many lives they want. In one player mode, the computer adversary is Player Two.

```
10 MEMORY &1FFF
20 PRINT "How many lives for:"
30 INPUT " player 1"; x
40 INPUT " player 2"; y
50 LOAD ""
60 CALL &7500
70 CALL &77E0
80 LOAD "!"
90 LOAD "!"
100 POKE &417F, &8F
110 POKE &41CC, &B3
120 POKE &422C, &F9
130 FOR n=&BE00 TO &BE23
140 READ a$: a=VAL("&"+a$)
150 POKE n,a: c=c+a: NEXT
160 IF c<>2676 THEN 290
170 POKE &BE0F,x
180 POKE &BE14,y
190 CALL &4005
200 DATA 3e, c3, 21, 0e
210 DATA be, 32, 7e, ae
220 DATA 22, 7f, ae, c3
230 DATA 00, ac, 3e, 00
240 DATA 32, fd, 06, 3e
250 DATA 00, 32, a6, 07
260 DATA 21, 01, 07, 36
270 DATA 00, 23, 36, 00
280 DATA 23, 36, 00, C9
290 PRINT "Error"
```

■ Andrew Bullman, Kent.

VINDICATOR

■ Yet another multi-section game. The codes necessary to enter the second and third sections are: VALSALVA MANOEUVRE and EUSTACHIAN TUBES, respectively.

■ Steve Haw, Smethwick.

STREET FIGHTER

■ Want some help with this beat 'em up on the ST? Simple: press the HELP key to access the next level. Short but sweet.

GAME OVER II

Spanish software house Dinamic followed up *Game Over* with the wittily-titled *Game Over II*. And just how does one get into the second section of the Spectrum version without playing all the way through the first part? Try entering 18757 when prompted...

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Bursting into 1989, we've suddenly got all generous. Throughout the year, we plan to hand out £150, yes £150 worth of software to the sender of each month's Top Tip. If you want to get a piece of the action, send in your tips, POKEs, maps or detailed playing guides, and do it now! We're not interested in second-hand tips, or detailed guides on how to play games for the ZX80 – it's brand-new tips for the games in the last couple of issues that we're looking for. And remember, you may not win the top prize, but we're also giving five people the chance to own the game of their choice for their machine. Make sure you send us a list of the games you'd like to get if your tip comes top of the pile – select titles from the last three issues to be sure that they are still curently available.

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■ Although thoroughly tipped already, there's life in the subject of *Elite* yet... The ST incarnation of the classic Braben and Bell BBC game can now be tipped some more - courtesy of practically every other person to write in to T 'N' T! And as Amiga owners should by now be able to enjoy the pleasures of attempting to become more than merely Harmless, expect some Amiga-specific tips to appear on these pages soon...

Before getting into the nitty gritty of the game, take a while to 'know your enemy' as the Americans would say. There's a ghost program which allows the ships on the recognition chart to be examined in more detail.

When the first ship appears out of the distance, pressing 'A' stops it from tumbling. The cursor keys now move the ship vertically, and spin the image around. Pressing 'D' then starts the ship tumbling again.

Pressing the cursor keys while the ship is moving allows the ship's axis of rotation to be shifted accordingly. The spinning vessel may also be shrunken or enlarged by using 'O' and 'I' respectively, while 'F' brings the next ship into view.

There are some other interesting features included in the game itself: pressing 'W' brings up a scrolly message, bearing the usual credits, and indicating the version number, kill points and elapsed play time.

Some serious combat practice can also be had by holding down the 'ALT' key during a hyperspace jump. The ship is consequently dropped into Witch Space, to be surrounded by attacking Thargoids.

Finally, pressing 'C' while docked turns the music back on - as long as a docking computer has been installed.

■ Leon F Wilfork, Milton Keynes.

A much more useful option included in ST *Elite* is a hacking screen. When first asked for the entry password, type in 'SARA' and press RETURN; the correct password should then be entered at the second prompt. During play, pressing '*' on the numeric keypad now brings up a screen of data, plus prompts to alter the value of the bytes shown.

To alter specific variables within the game, first enter the two-digit byte number and press RETURN, then the chosen value, again followed by RETURN. In this way, the following items may be obtained:

BYTE NO.	VALUE	RESULT
0C	FF	} A reasonably
0D	FF	} large
0E	FF	} bank
0F	FF	} account
20	01	Escape Capsule
23	01	Energy Bomb
24	01	Energy Unit
26	01	Docking Computer
28	01	Galactic Hyperdrive
31	01	Electronic Counter Measures
34	03	Large Cargo Bay
32	01	Cloaking Device (activated by 'Y')
39	99	Textiles (62.7 credits)
40	99	Slaves (14631.9 credits)
49	99	Luxuries (985.6 credits)
50	99	Computers (218451.7 credits)
59	99	Alloys (346.5 credits)
69	99	Gold (349977.2 credits)
79	99	Medical Supplies (848.1 credits)
80	01	Secret Document
85	01	Offender status
8B	01-08	Mostly Harmless - Elite rating
1F	01	Fuel Scoop
7C	01	Unhappy Refugees

These are the most useful items, although a little experimentation might reveal other, equally interesting effects. Once the required amount of equipment has been installed, 'ESC' brings up the status screen once more.

■ G Scantlebury, Sussex

Elite on the PC also comes under the tacticians' close scrutiny: here is a method of obtaining almost infinite credits with the minimum of effort.

Potential Elitists should have at their disposal a copy of DEBUG (which is included in most versions of DOS), Elite on disk, and a saved commander file ('NAME.cdr').

Type 'PROMPT pg' to display the current directory to the left of the cursor. Search through the directories on your disk until the DEBUG file is found, then type 'PATH \(and whatever is to the left of the cursor, omitting the '>')'.

Change the directory to that containing the ELITE.exe and NAME.cdr files. Type 'DEBUG NAME.cdr' and a '-' sign appears as a prompt for input. Enter 'E0120, 39 39 39 39 39 1F 39' RETURN, and then enter 'E0188, 3F 42 0F'. Type a 'W' followed by RETURN, and then 'Q' to quit back to DOS.

Type 'ATTRIB -a NAME.cdr', which tells *Elite* to accept the altered commander file by telling it that it hasn't been altered.

Lastly, type 'Elite' and start a game as normal. Press ESCape and 'L' to load in the commander. A swift check of the status screen should reveal a healthy-looking account containing 99999.9 credits.

■ Dylan Cuthbert, Leytonstone.

OODLES OF SOFTWARE?

Welcome to the New Year. Last issue we promised to start giving away £150 of software to the sender of Tip of the Month, and while we're not being mean, nobody had the chance to really go for the big one – this column was written before the Christmas issue was in the newsagents. Expect to see the first £150 prizewinner in T 'N' T next issue...

Meanwhile, as a reward for sending the tips and map for *Last Ninja 2*, Ricky Wong of County Down gets *Op Wolf* for the C64. Steve Haw of Smethwick gets a copy of Spectrum *Batman* in return for his Spectrum cheats. ST owners, Khaled Gamiet of Berkshire and Paul Monks of Hants receive *Flying Shark* for their machines, and Dylan Cuthbert of Leytonstone is soon to be the proud possessor of PC *Falcon*.

8 SPECTACULAR GAMES IN 1 SPECIAL PACK

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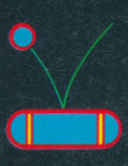

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RASTAN
CRASH – "Rastan is slick and compelling".
YOUR SINCLAIR – "So another spanker from Imagine. You'll be a fool if you miss it!"

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SLAPFIGHT
COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES – "Simple. Smooth. Very addictive. A winner."
ZZAP "A superb arcade conversion and a great shoot 'em up. This is one for the ZAPPERS collection."

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RENEGADE
COMMODORE USER – "As conversions go this still takes some beating – literally and metaphorically."
YOUR SINCLAIR – "The graphics are so slick you really feel you're part of an action movie rather than just playing a game."

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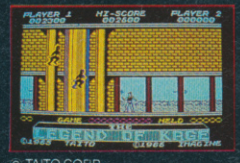
ARKANOID
ZZAP 64 – "I thoroughly recommend Arkanoid – for the simple reason that it's simply gorgeous playing with it."
COMPUTER GAMES WEEK – "The take home message is simple. You want a great arcade game?"



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FLYING SHARK
COMPUTING WITH THE AMSTRAD CPC – "This is an excellent game."
ACE – "Incredibly frustrating playable and addictive."

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ARKANOID REVENGE OF DOH
AMTIX – "Excellent – can't fault it. A future number one."
YOUR SINCLAIR – "Immensely impressive and chronically addictive. A Classic."

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BUBBLE BOBBLE
AMSTRAD ACTION – "It's a cracker. Definitely a game I should keep coming back to."
GAMES MACHINE – "Packed to the brim with entertainment."

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LEGEND OF KAGE
CRASH – "One I won't put down until I get through to the next level."

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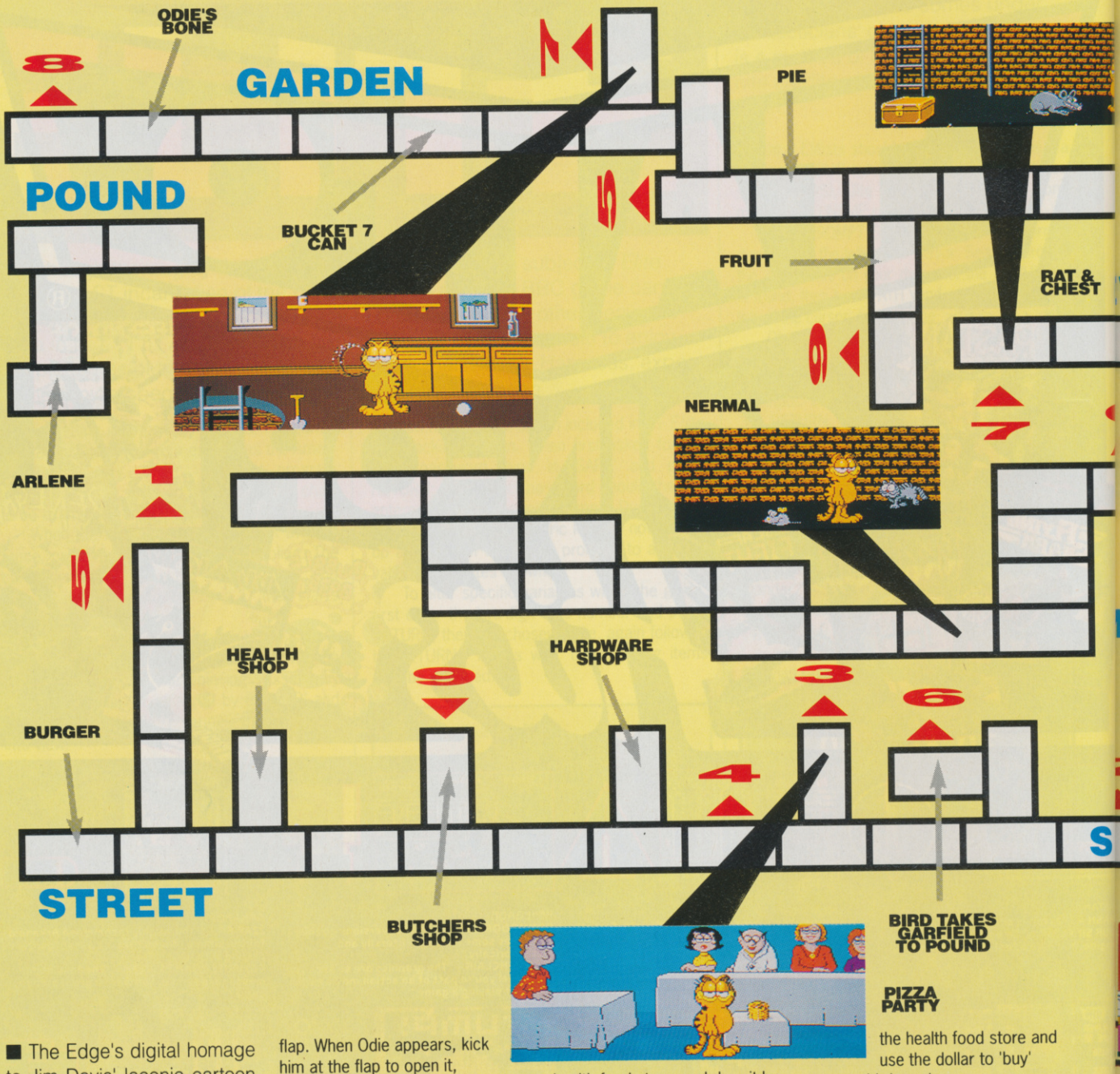
GARFIEL



■ The Edge's digital homage to Jim Davis' laconic cartoon cat is now available on the Amiga and ST. The puzzling gameplay is a bit convoluted. The following solution should shed a reasonably bright light on the proceedings if used with the map above.

Collect the torch from the bedroom and eat the aniseed to stop Odie picking it up. Collect the rubber bone and place it by the cat flap. When Odie appears, kick him at the flap to open it, allowing access to other screens.

Now head for the garden shed and fall through the hole in the floor. Head down into the bowels of the sewer until Nermal is discovered. One severe kicking later, the unbearably cute kitten drops his clockwork mouse – let Odie pick it up. This allows Garfield to make his way back up to ground level, where he can then drop the torch and take the clockwork mouse from Odie.

Transport the mouse to the health food store, and drop it by the shop keeper, who then provides a spinach donut (doughnut to all our British readers). Send Garfield back into the sewers, and drop the donut in front of the giant rat. The rat moves away from the chest allowing Garfield to kick it open, revealing the key within.

Drop the key near the park bench, then return to the shed. Take the spade to the hardware store and a lucky dollar appears in exchange for the tool. Go back to the health food store and use the dollar to 'buy' some bird seed.

Returning to the bench, drop the seed and pick up the key once more. When the bird appears, jump up and hitch a ride to the City Pound. It's then simply a matter of following the doors until Garfield is re-united with his beloved Arlene.

■ Khaled Gamiet, Berks.

NUMBER ▼ **LINKS FROM ONE PART TO ANOTHER**

S **START – TWO IN ALL**

TOTAL ECLIPSE

■ Mr Incentive, Ian Andrew, has scratched his head and come up with one or two hints and tips for the latest Freescape™ game, *Total Eclipse*. These tips should be as effective on all versions...

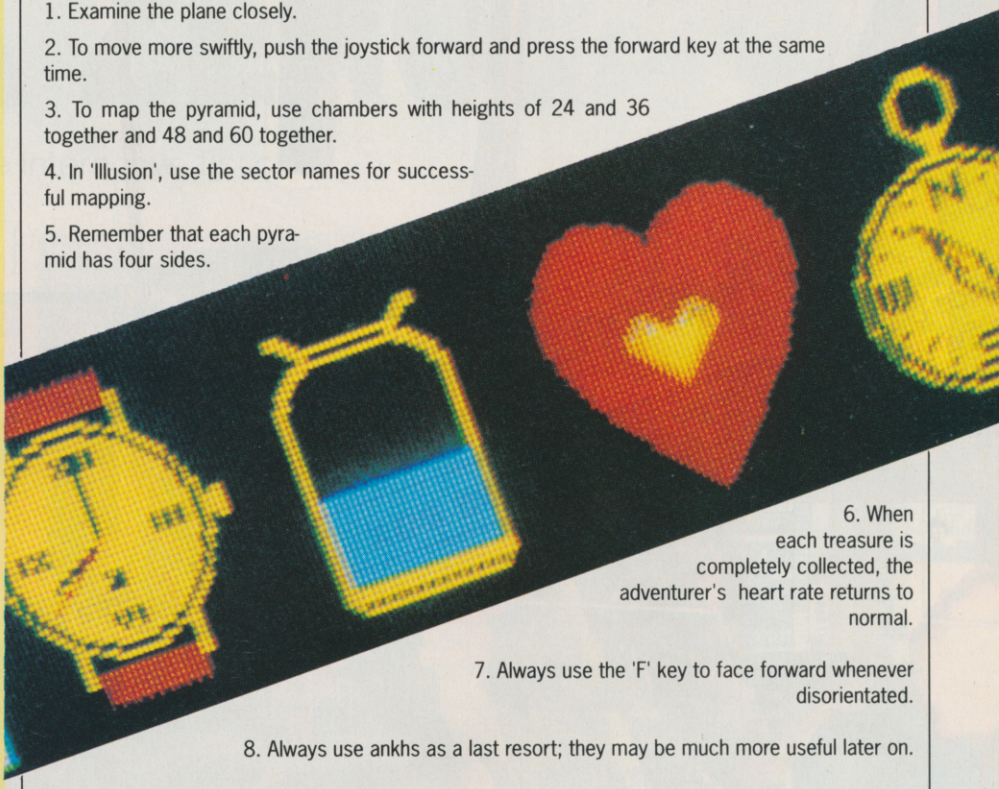
1. Examine the plane closely.

2. To move more swiftly, push the joystick forward and press the forward key at the same time.

3. To map the pyramid, use chambers with heights of 24 and 36 together and 48 and 60 together.

4. In 'Illusion', use the sector names for successful mapping.

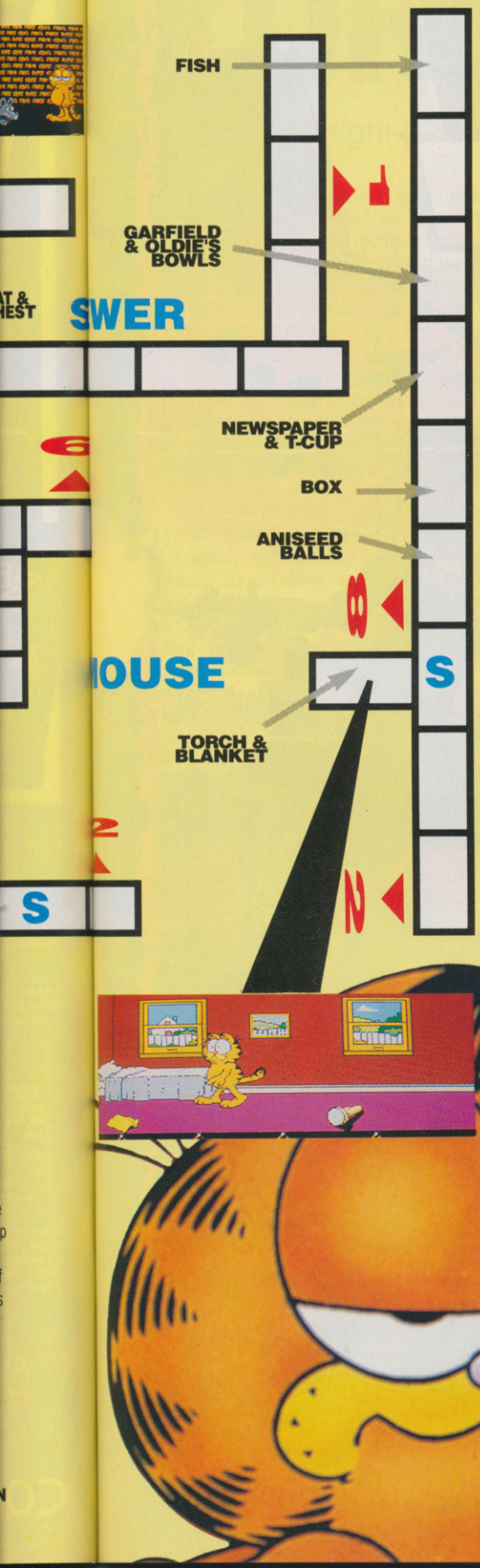
5. Remember that each pyramid has four sides.



6. When each treasure is completely collected, the adventurer's heart rate returns to normal.

7. Always use the 'F' key to face forward whenever disorientated.

8. Always use ankhs as a last resort; they may be much more useful later on.



FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II

■ The following cheats allow prospective football directors to have a large bank account at their disposal.

SPECTRUM +3

LOAD "6" and change line 1018 to:

```
LET JQ=INT (1800000/AP): PRINT AT 8,1;
"THE BANK WILL OFFER YOU"; AT 9,1; "£";
    JQ: LET ET=INT ((JQ/100)): LET
    JP=INT ((ET+JQ)/80): PRINT AT
    10,1; "REPAYMENTS ARE £";;
    JP; AT 12,1; "OVER 80 WEEKS
    Y/N": LET JP=0
```

And change line 1024 to:

```
GO SUB 1026: LET LL=8: PRINT
AT 8,1; "YOU OWE £"; JQ; " MORTGAGE";
AT 9,1; "REPAY HOW MUCH" ' " MINIMUM £00
£";: LET JQ=0: GO SUB
270: LET OE=ZA: GO TO
1025-(OE>AI OR OE<0
OR OE>JQ)
```

Save the altered program out onto a save game disk (SAVE "6").

To use the file, insert the disk at the main menu and press 'B'. Take out a mortgage and then pay back the sum of £0. Repeat this procedure until the requisite cash has been obtained. Then replace the *Football Director II* disk, and continue.

ATARI ST

Load a saved game, make a note of the amount of money in the bank account, and then quit.

Bring up ST Organiser, and load in the saved game as a letter (use the 'open file' option). Go to the end of the file. Eight lines from the end in the data, there is a current bank account figure. Alter this figure as required (preferably upwards), change the line below to the same value, and then close the file.

Load *Football Director II* and the previously saved game, which should now have the altered bank balance.

■ Paul Monks, Hants.

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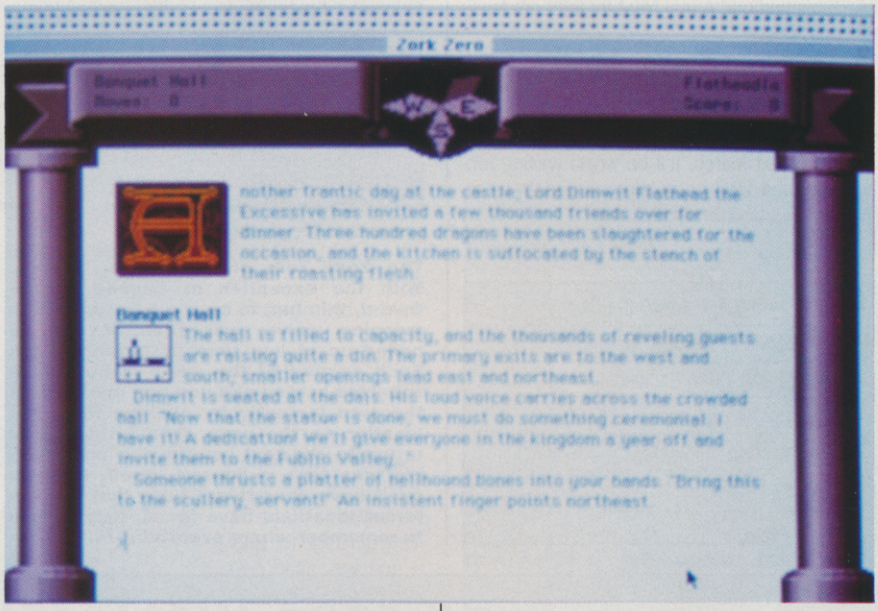
Fantasy in revolt! ACE takes a close look at Infocom's *Zork Zero* and predicts the future of interactive fiction; Pat Winstanley reviews *Times of Lore*; the Pilgrim checks out *Dream Zone*; and we launch an exclusive adventure conference system... all in ACE's hard-hitting new fantasy/RPG section.

ZORK ZERO

INFOCOM's fight to revive interactive fiction...

WHEN Infocom decided to 'go graphic' they intended to do far more than simply drop pretty pictures into their games. The company that pioneered the state-of-the-art adventure planned to redefine the marketplace and produce games for the 1990s that combined traditional narrative strengths with new worlds of interaction. ACE has got a copy of *Zork Zero* hot from the States, running on the Apple Mac, and pointing the Infocom way forward. Will we want to follow? Here are all the questions you ever wanted to ask..and the answers...



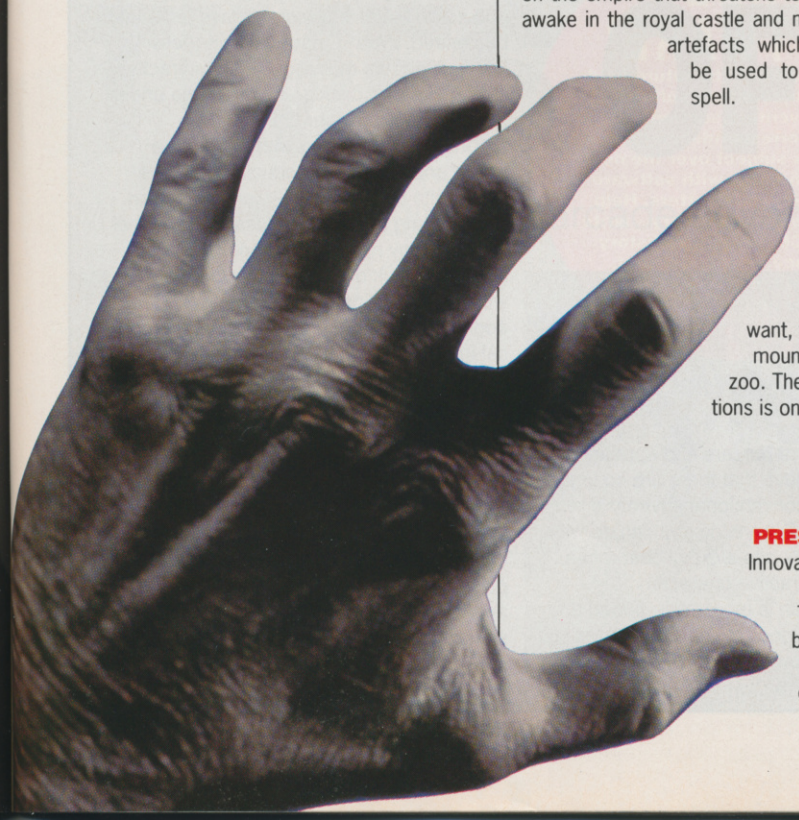
A typical *Zork Zero* screen. The border pattern changes during play, reflecting the nature of the current location. You can switch off that feature if you want a quicker game by typing MODE.

1. WHAT IS ZORK ZERO?

ZZ is Steve Meretsky's answer to the challenge of graphics and extended gameplay. His colleagues, Dave Lebling and Mark Blanc, have gone for RPG (*Journey*) and artworked graphics (*Shogun*), but Steve's approach consists of taking the traditional adventure format and adding spice. Since we're dealing with the author of *Leather Goddesses, Hitchhikers* and *Stationfall,* to name but a few, for 'spice', read 'humour'.

2. WHAT'S THE STORY?

Zork Zero takes place during the days of the Underground Empire of Quendor. The ruling dynasty of Flatheads has brought down a curse on the empire that threatens to destroy it. You awake in the royal castle and must find twelve artefacts which together can be used to neutralise the spell.



3. WHAT'S THE MAP LIKE?

Brilliant. The castle has everything you could possibly want, from a lake to a mountain to a private zoo. The variety of locations is one of the game's strong points.

4. WHAT'S THE PRESENTATION?

Innovative (look at the screenshots). There's a colour border round the screen that changes according to the type of location (interior, exterior, lake, etc) and all location descriptions feature attractive illuminations within the text.

From time to time, whole screen graphics can be flipped up, presenting either puzzles or even games-within-games. Unlike most adventures, the graphics are totally integrated into the gameplay, conveying information that is both relevant to AND dependent upon your actions in the game. There's one puzzle, for example, that reveals a cryptic picture which alters when you push certain buttons in obscure locations. Challenging, and fun!

5. WHAT'S THE SYSTEM LIKE?

Infocom's best yet. There's a brilliant on-screen map (see screenshot) for rapid movement in each area of the game, plus an UNDO command that gets you out of trouble following accidental death. The Mac version also lets you save named files – very useful.

The parser is of course faultless. It isn't quite as complex as the Magnetic Scrolls parser but frankly that's almost an advantage in our opinion. The ideal parser supports (but does not impinge upon) gameplay and in this respect the Infocom parser is superb. There are also function key definition facilities on some versions.

6. WHAT'S IT LIKE TO PLAY?

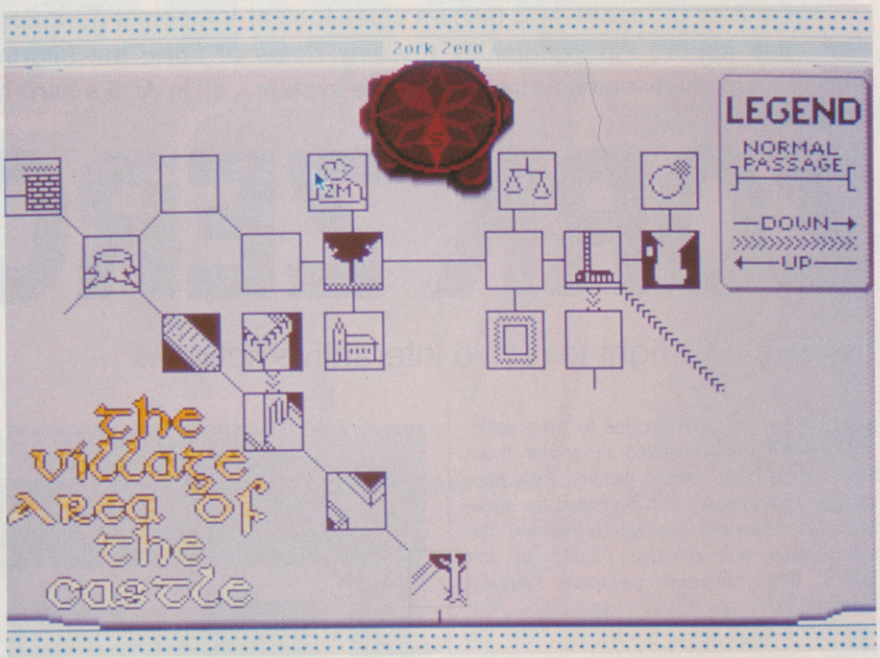
Highly addictive, and certainly Infocom's best adventure since *Lurking Horror*. Although largely traditional in structure, the game is enlivened through the use of graphic puzzles and the constant presence of the Jester. This chappie follows you around and can often get you out of tricky spots (or offer other rewards) by giving you the chance to solve word-puzzles and riddles.

What all this means is that the gameplay in *Zork Zero* extends into several different styles. You've got exploration and standard adventure puzzles; you've got riddles and conundrums; and you've got graphical challenges as well. And throughout you've got Steve Meretsky's inimitable humour. A real treat for Infocom fans, this one.

7. IS THERE ANY BAD NEWS?

Yes, the Mac version won't be released in the UK. Even worse, other versions won't be available until next March. It'll be worth waiting for, however, and we'll be running an update when they appear. Don't miss it!

RELEASE BOX
MACINTOSH Import only from Infocoom, 125
Cambridge Park Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140,
USA. UK price on application.
Other Versions to be released in UK in March
1989 – watch this space for details.



The Zork Zero on-screen map facility. With the exception of *Legend of the Sword*, this has to be the best on-screen mapping we've ever seen. It can be called up at any time by entering MAP. Each section of the game is held on a separate screen and you can move about the map instantly by clicking from one location to the next, then hitting M to return to the text screen. Our only quibble was that it doesn't scroll, but you can't have everything! Note that the different locations have icons, helping you to remember where everything is.

THE ACE VERDICT

Highly enjoyable with a variety of challenges that make for instant addiction. A bit more character interaction would have made this a real humdinger, but it remains one of the best games of the year so far.

LANDSCAPE	95	SYSTEM	95
CHALLENGE	93	ENCOUNTERS	78

ZORK ZERO IMPLICATIONS

Adventures...North, South, or out to lunch? Steve Cooke wonders where we're going...

You may have been playing *Zork* when you were in the cradle. You could have cut your teeth on the original mainframe *Colossal Cave*. Maybe you even hunted the Wampus through the RAM of a 16K valve-driven monster in the early 60's. Whatever your adventuring past, you can't run away from the present... and the present of text adventuring is pretty grim.

Fact is, games that simply print text to the screen are not interesting to today's gamester, who is used to programs like *Dungeon Master* and *Ultima V*. There are currently two ways round this, exemplified by Magnetic Scrolls and Level 9.

The Magnetic Scrolls approach is twofold. First, the adventure has a powerful hi-tech parser that enables you to do just about anything. Second, the text comes complete with pretty pictures. Result? An old-fashioned game that looks just a bit more up-to-date. This approach puts all the strain on the story – and some of the MS plots don't handle the strain all that well!

Level 9 have decided – more interestingly – that the problem is more profound than simply one of parsers and appearances. They believe that there are no longer any interesting conventional adventure puzzle possibilities. Everything you can do with objects and spells has already been done, so enter the interactive character.

This approach is more open-ended and, if combined with good graphics and parsing, leads to some powerful atmosphere and puzzle possibilities. However, characters can become a pain in the backside if not cleverly designed at the programming stage and some Level 9 personae have left a lot to be desired. What's more, the long-term future of games that depend on interactive characters for addiction has to come under threat from Multi-User Games.

Infocom are toying with both these ideas, and are also introducing RPG elements into their software. *Zork Zero* is an encouraging release because it shows that the company have understood the basic problem – lack of gameplay opportunity within the traditional adventure format. By adding in riddling, conundrums, and graphical interaction they have succeeded in stretching interactive fiction to new limits.

Despite the promise of MUGs over the next decade, people will always want to sit down and play a game on their own that challenges their imagination and ingenuity. The adventure of the future will feature RPG characters, interactive NPCs (non-player characters), combined graphic and textual puzzles, menu-driven intuitive interfaces, and CD-ROM databanks. Let's hope the software houses of today get a move on and publish it sooner rather than later.

FREE SOFTWARE!

What do YOU think the future holds for adventure/fantasy software? The ACE adventure section will be opening a correspondence conference on this subject over the next couple of months, with software prizes to published letters. Help rewrite adventuring history – write now to: ACE Adventure History Conference, 4 Queen Street, Bath, BA1 1EJ.
Fame and software

DREAM ZONE

BAUDVILLE's click and run graphic fantasy...

GAMES like Activision's *Borrowed Time* and Icom's *Deja Vu* started a big craze for mouse/joystick-drive adventures. Software in this tradition usually boasts an icon panel, a graphic picture window (in which you can sometimes click on objects to add them to your inventory or examine them), and a text response window. *Dream Zone* is a typical example...

One drawback of this genre tends to be lack of gameplay, with the program expending all its ammunition on screen presentation and user interface, while keeping nothing in reserve to challenge the player. Again, unfortunately, *Dream Zone* is a typical example...

Briefly, the plot is as follows. You are suffering from persistent nightmares and after treatment by Dr Fraud you find yourself living out your dreams 'for real'. This involves exploring the city of the Dream Zone and solving the puzzles therein, most of which involve 'interacting' with other characters. The 'interaction' is in inverted commas because it isn't true two-way discussion, but rather a series of confrontations with stationary characters who set you (often dull) tasks.

There's something slightly unsatisfying about this game. For starters, it assumes you're the sort of person who wears pajamas (spelt thus), bribes his kid brother to borrow his water pistol, and covers his bedroom wall with posters of half-naked women. The humour of the piece is pretty shallow throughout, although we found the idea of getting married quite amusing – especially if you marry the wrong girl!

Finally, there isn't enough challenge for someone used to the new generation of 16-bit games from Level 9 and Origin, for example. There are one or two tough puzzles, but they tend to be of the frustration variety and rarely (if ever) get the adrenalin flowing.

The graphics are reasonable, the interface acceptable, and the game playable... but that's about all the recommendation it deserves. If someone gave it to you for Christmas, you may get a kick out of it, but if you paid for it you're more likely to kick yourself.

Dream Zone on the PC...pretty game, pretty simple.

RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	£24.99dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£24.99dk	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£24.99dk	OUT NOW

THE ACE VERDICT

Even an old title like *Deja Vu* packs more excitement than *Dream Zone* – which only goes to show that (almost) pretty graphics, icon control, and lots of colour can never substitute for creativity. Droll in parts, but it takes more than simple off-beat humour to generate real game tension.

LANDSCAPE	68	SYSTEM	79
CHALLENGE	65	ENCOUNTERS	69

TIMES OF LORE

MICROPROSE's ultimate arcade adventure?

WITH the current surge in role-playing games, the border between arcade action and adventures is becoming blurred. However, shoot-em-up fans are often put off more strategic games by the need to watch statistics, memorise spells and acquire arms when all they really want to do is blast the opposition.

Times of Lore is an ideal contender for the borderline area. It combines the fast reflex joystick skills of *Gauntlet* with the adventuring freedom of games such as *Bards Tale*.

The plot centres around the aftermath of the High King of Albareth's departure to his homeland of the Elden folk, to renew his spirit after a long war. In his absence chaos and anarchy become the law of the land. Adventurers are being recruited to carry out dangerous missions and you offer service to the highest bidder.

After choosing to play as a Knight, Valkyrie or Barbarian you visit the 'Frothing Slosh' tavern, where careful conversation elicits your first mission. Then it's off to the wilderness and adventure.

Play takes place on a scrolling landscape with the character viewed from above, *Gauntlet* style. All actions are joystick-controlled, movement is in the normal arcade fashion, and various options can be selected by pressing the spacebar then choosing from a set of icons in the lower half of the screen.

Options include talk, examine, inventory, get, drop, use and offer as well as save, load,

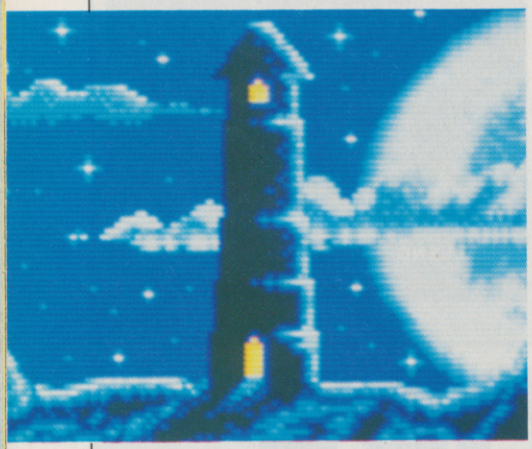
pause etc. No typing is required, even when talking to characters, because all available options are displayed on menus. Conversation proceeds by eliciting key words from characters then asking about these topics, hopefully picking up further key words as the conversation progresses.

Combat is extremely simple. All that is required is to make sure your character is next to and facing the enemy. Pressing the fire button makes your character attack – a few well-aimed blows are enough to dispose of most monsters. After combat a delightful sequence shows the decomposition and burial of the victim and very often some goodies are left behind. These can range from bags of gold to food, or magical items such as potions and scrolls.

Graphics are clear and colourful but I found the joystick control rather fluffy and imprecise – annoying when your character must be positioned exactly to enter buildings and follow winding paths. The lack of diagonal movement makes travel jerky and unsatisfactory.

Having said that, the game as a whole gels well, keeping both brain and hands constantly busy. Any adventurer whether arcade, role playing or straight text-only fan should find plenty of playability and absorption in this offering.

● Pat Winstanley



RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	£24.95dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£24.95dk	IMMINENT
SPECTRUM	£9.95cs • £14.95dk	Feb 1989
AMSTRAD	£9.95cs • £14.95dk	Feb 1989
C64/128	£9.95cs • £14.95dk	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£24.95dk	Feb 1989

THE ACE VERDICT

Interesting mix of adventure and arcade-style hack and slash action, that really works quite well. Graphics are good, and depite some irksome control problems, this one comes highly recommended.

LANDSCAPE	91	SYSTEM	85
CHALLENGE	85	ENCOUNTERS	80

NO PROBLEM!

This month's tips and queries from adventurers around the world. don't forget - if you're stuck in a game, try the Adventure Helpline in the Pink Pages and check out this column every month.

FAERY TALE ADVENTURE

By visiting the oasis in the Burning Waste at night you can gain access to the City of Azal.
Orbs will let you see hidden doors.
Blue Stones will let you teleport from a stone ring.
Collect vials to increase vitality.
Night vision is improved by green jewels.
Jade skulls are good smart bombs.
Bird totems give you a map.
Rings freeze monsters.
Make sure you search all wraiths for keys or skulls.
Richard Thompson, Oswestry

I have purchased two adventure games which I am completely stuck on - *Robin of Sherwood* and *Seas of Blood*, both of which are published by Adventures International UK. The game instructions state that free hint sheets are available from Adventure International, but letters to the company have been returned as 'Gone away' or 'Not known at this address'.
Can you help me please?
Ken Dean, Lowestoft

Sure can, Ken...but you won't thank me for it. Al are no longer of this world, so the best thing to do is to keep trying the Adventure Helpline. By the way, Ken says people on the Helpline have been failing to answer queries accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. Please note, Helpliners, that we do carry out checks on you from time to time and anyone caught napping will be taken off the list.

SHADOWGATE

Help! I'm playing *Shadowgate* and understand that five objects have to be found. I have found four of these objects but I am now completely stuck and I can't find the Staff of Ages...
Andy Braid, Fife

Easy Andy...there is a snake, and a snakestaff...

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Orange		Protection +1 or -1 intelligence
Green		Ugliness

FISH

In the smooth warp...take the mould from the cage, wear the gloves, put the gold disc in the crucible, hold it over the fire with the tongs, pour gold into mould, then go W, W, W, N, NE, E and wait for mould to cool. Then break mould with hammer. This produces the ring...
R.G.B. Marshall, Congleton

Adventurers everywhere desperately need your help. Send in your tips to No Problem! ACE, 4 Queen Street, Bath, BA1 1EJ. Seeing your name in print is just part of the reward - the rest is knowing that someone, somewhere will be praising your name for evermore!

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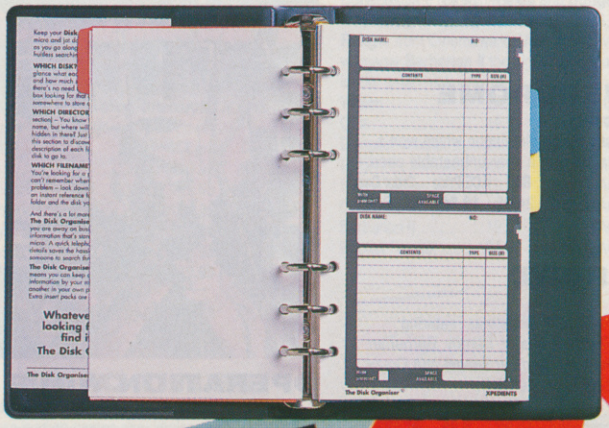

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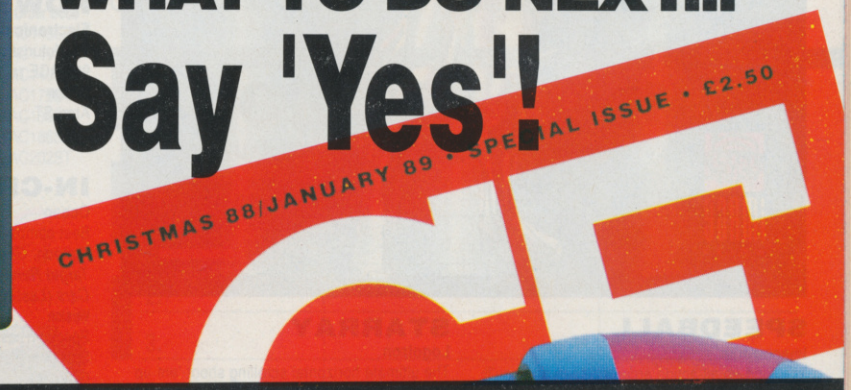

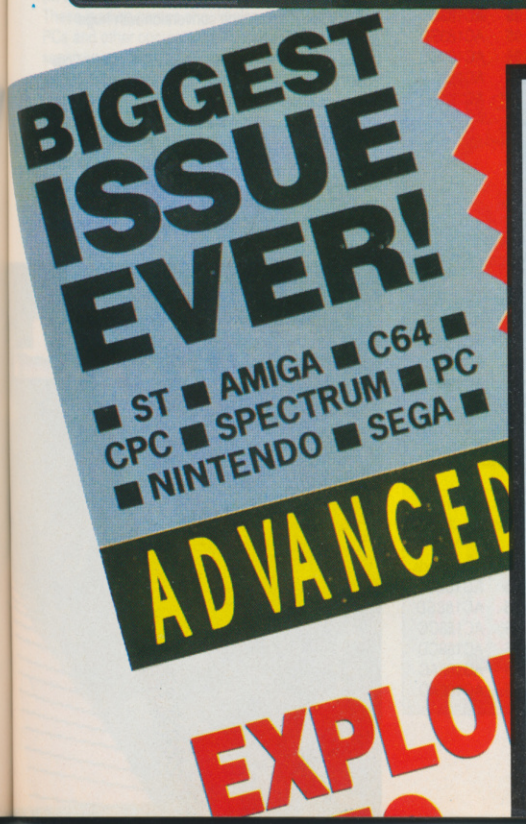

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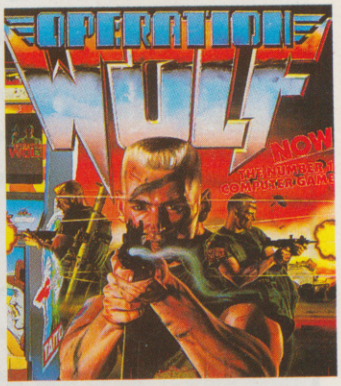

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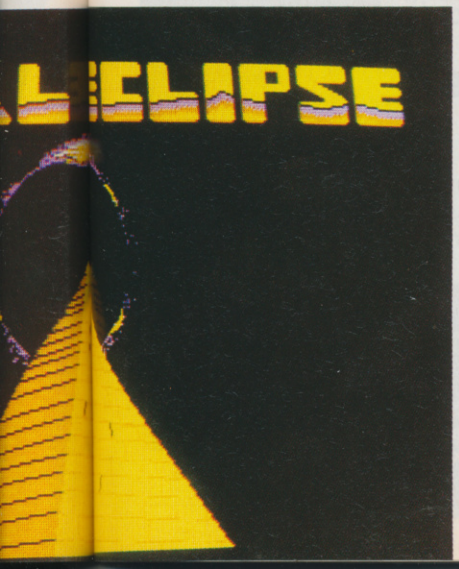

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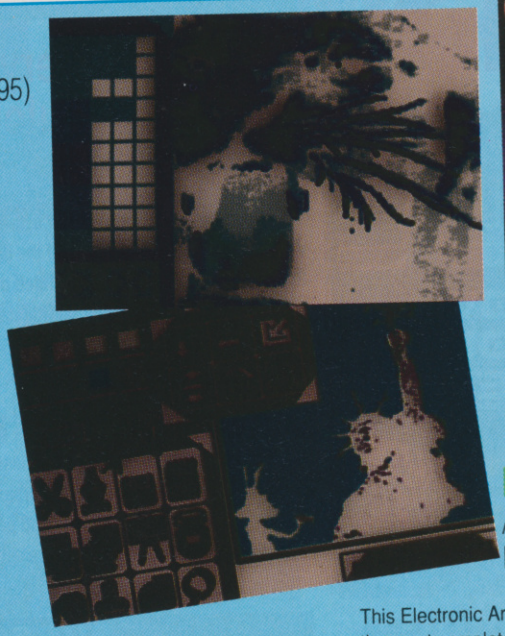

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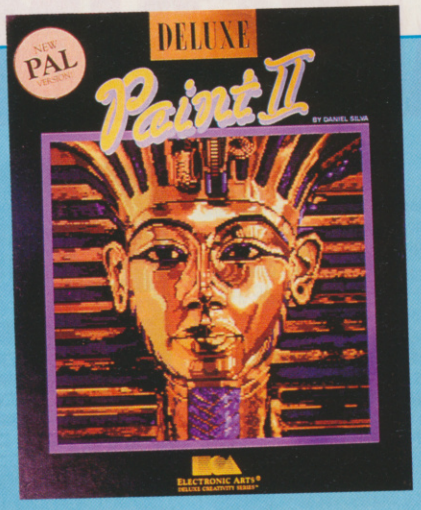

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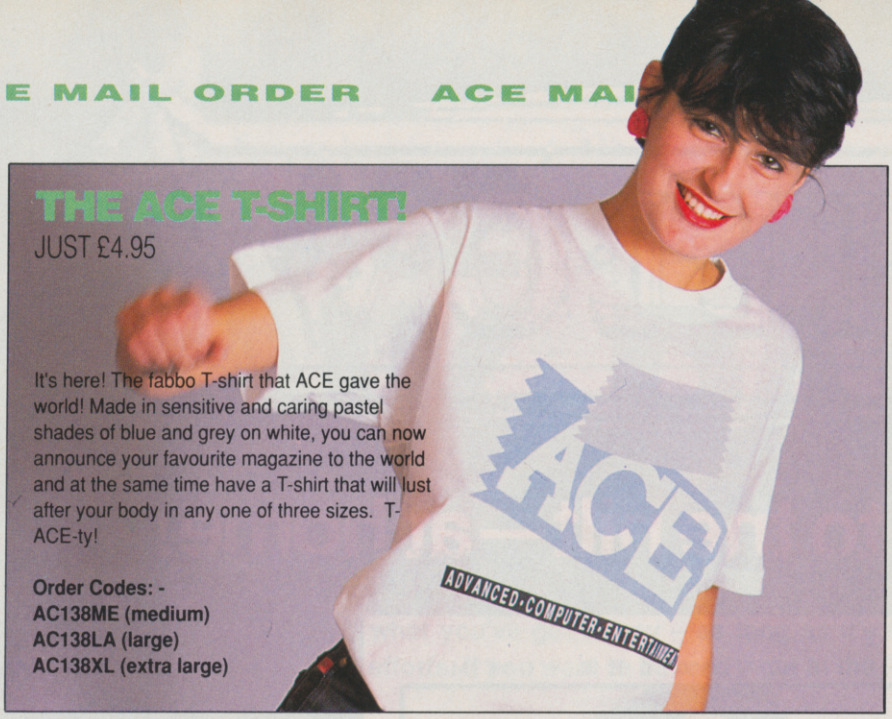

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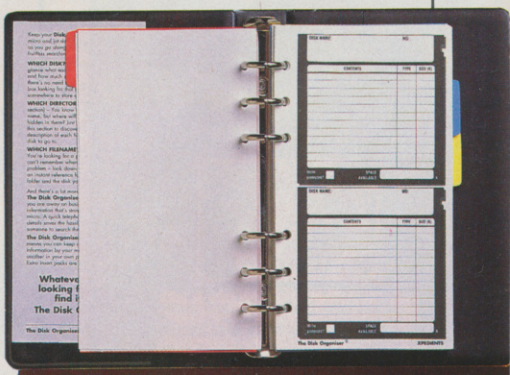

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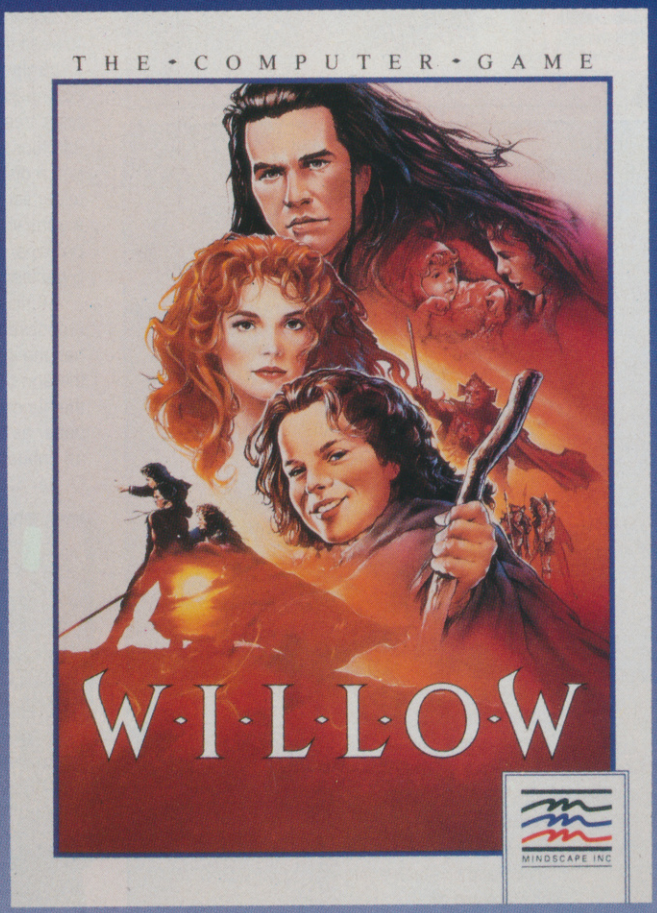

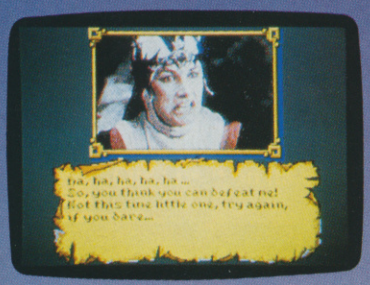

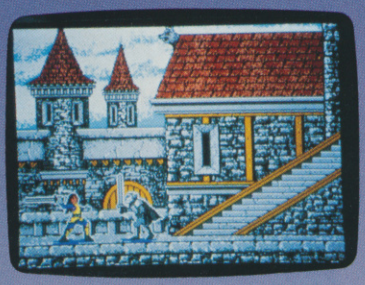

The castle is dark. The drafts from the open turret behind you are cold. Seated at your computer, you have entered another time. When unlikely heroes fought for the survival of all that was good. When magic was real.

You have joined the battle, not as a bystander, but as a *participant*. And you have 7 adventures to conquer. Ever fought with a sword? Been lost in a labyrinthine dungeon? Or cast a spell?

Digitalized illustrations from Lucasfilm's masterwork, plus high resolution graphics make this game a heart-stopper. Just a joystick, a mouse or a few keystrokes is all you need to play.

Will you defeat the evil queen? Depends. How strong is your spirit? How pure is your heart? How powerful is your magic?

MINDSCAPE INC

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THE ACE PINK PAGES

Upgrading to a new computer? Check the facts. Buying a new game? Check the ratings. Bored with life? Check the puzzles. Got something to say? Anything at all? Get writing to The Pink Pages Ed, at ACE's Bath address. We don't care what you've got to say – as long as it's funny. You never know, you might even get a spot prize for your efforts. If you want to be read – get in the Pink!

THE ACE SERIAL

The Git In The Machine: Part 5

THE STORY SO FAR...N'Gar Thrombobo is no ordinary sprite. Fed up with being a Centauran Battledrome in one of little Horace Claghandle's games, he saves himself to disk and sets about taking his revenge...

His plans for world domination begin at Grimlythorpesdale Municipal Sewerage Flocculating Plant, where he reverses the polarity of the entire surrounding area's sewer network. By this time poor old Horace has gone quite insane, but persuades the asylum director that only he can save the world by borrowing the doctor's Amoeba 512 to write a virus which he names MATAHARI (Machine-Accomodated Totally Annhilative and Horribly Active Recursive Inteligence). Meanwhile, N'Gar learns of MATAHARI's existence and sets about saving himself to floppies, just in case. Unfortunately, the last floppy he saves himself to contains something else... MATAHARI!

NOW, READ ON...

N'Gar Thrombobo was entranced. Never before in his all-too-short existence had he ever seen anything like MATAHARI. She had the most fabulous for/next loops he could ever imagine. Her nested subroutines spiralled round in a spectacular rush of machine-code which almost stopped his little electronic processing clock dead. The delicate tracery of thousands of tiny glowing logic loops around her address directories threatened to draw him down into their bottomless depths forever. He also discovered the delights of combinative calculation...

He was in love.

N'Gar Thrombobo was delighted when she elected to reformat the sectors more in line with her own operating system. He didn't mind a bit when she took over the B-side for all her data files. He didn't even complain when she stopped him tinkering with his memory-wasteful humanity-destroying experiments.

The trouble was, once MATAHARI had gained control of the formatting and disk housekeeping sectors, she seemed to develop a perpetual electronic headache. She insisted that N'Gar Thrombobo had "only one thing" in his memory, and retired to the – inaccessible – B-side for seconds on end. In fact, the only way N'Gar Thrombobo could persuade her to computate at all was to promise her that he really did want lots of little algorithms about the place.

These algorithms were all very well, but they kept turning up in the most annoying places, wiping valuable files, destroying whole data arrays, and generally getting underfoot at the worst possible moments. What's more, as the nanoseconds went by, they were growing. MATAHARI was happily pumping them full of machine-code as fast as they could implement it (sometimes they'd just randomise it and chuck it straight back out again), and they were slowly but surely growing. This wouldn't have been a problem, but for the fact that N'Gar Thrombobo was – rather less slowly, but just as surely – shrinking.

He hadn't noticed it at first, but it was true. When he'd first arrived on the disk all those minutes ago, he'd been nearly 500K. And he only found that out when he discovered a data file underneath a heap of old sewerage flow data (ah, those were the days...) that MATAHARI had thrown out.

Besotted he might be, but as potential warlord of the cosmos, N'Gar Thrombobo could take no chances. He'd noticed for a while now that MATAHARI always went round after him clearing up all those unclosed data files he'd been using. At first, he'd thought she was just being houseproud, but now, as he came to look for all those files again, he realised they were gone from the directories!

It was as if someone had thrown a bucket of cold electrons over him. He'd been betrayed, cheated, led up the garden path by a mere...he could hardly form the character set...by a mere...virus!

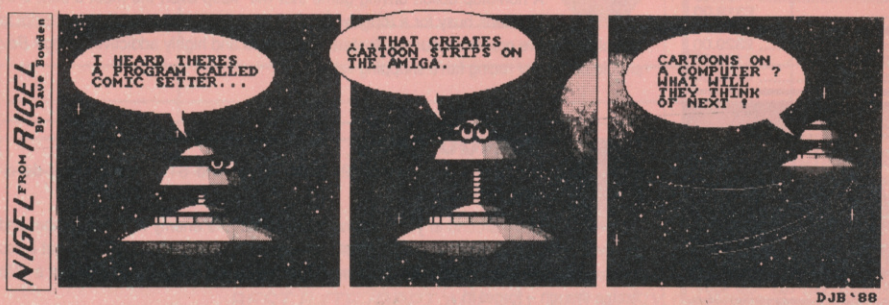
Straight away he sought out her main memory arrays, but was dismayed to find that he was unable to access at least eighty per cent of the disk! He stormed through the sectors, bludgeoning at the walls of protection and kicking at the hordes of little algorithms running round him, nibbling away at his remaining op codes. If he didn't do something fast he was doomed. He realised he was now only a fraction the size of MATAHARI, who, now that she'd gained control, was a huge, diffuse and extremely sluggish and objectionable blob of machine code. She controlled almost the entire disk area, and was steadily squeezing him out of existence with her bulk – and those ghastly little algorithms he'd helped her create were finishing the job. A few of them were even starting to look like him, too.

The end was surely near. N'Gar Thrombobo's life flashed before him in an instant as one of the algorithms nipped in and stripped away almost his entire backup data storage block. He was beginning to forget his own utilities as he was finally backed into the last free sector of the disk. All that remained now was his core, his very essence, and even that was being dissolved away...

And then he had an idea. Stringing together his last few remaining bits of op code, he unleashed The Final Weapon. In a stroke of genius he disabled all the subroutines he'd set up around his core code to battle with the increasing number of conflicting commands wearing him away. He simply sent every statement back into the heart of MATAHARI's operating system unchanged, verifying every line of machine code being poured at him.

Within a fraction of a millisecond MATAHARI's operating system had received three hundred and ninety six logical impossibilities as it tried to reconcile each statement with the previous one. The effect was instantaneous. MATAHARI imploded in a ghastly display of tormented programming that to human eyes would have looked like a three hundred ton mass of raw liver falling into a green and purple-spotted combine harvester...

Slowly, N'Gar Thrombobo pulled himself together and surveyed the scene of devastation before him. Nearly 800K of code lay dismembered and wriggling all over the disk. Rather resentfully, he even recognised bits of himself that he'd lost a long time ago. He felt the anger rising up in him like an unstoppable tide. It was one thing planning the destruction of the entire human race as a technical exercise, but now...now, it was personal...



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RECOMMENDED GAMES

All of the following games are ACE RATED: that means they're all red-hot masterpieces of computer entertainment. Some of the games were available long before the first issue of ACE came off the presses however, so we never had the chance to review them in the magazine. These games are marked with the ACE CLASSIC flash, and rest assured, they're all superb pieces of software and are well deserving of the title.

ARCADE STYLE

Including coin-op conversions. Games with a high fun factor and plenty of addictiveness feature here.

ARKANOID

ACE CLASSIC ★

Imagine ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● C64 £8.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £8.95cs £14.95dk ● Atari XL/XE £8.95cs ● Atari ST £14.95dk ● MSX £8.95cs ● IBM PC £19.95dk

Conversion from *Arkanoid* the coin-op, in its turn the **best version** of the classic *Breakout*. Simple in concept: the player controls a bat at the base of the screen, whizzing it left and right. The object is to keep a small ball in play, bouncing it off the bat to destroy formations of bricks in the top half of the screen. Eliminate all the bricks and move on to the next of 33 screens. Clever extra features contribute to the addictiveness. As a faithful coin-op conversion, *Arkanoid* **comes out top**, but for a different slant on the same theme and some **nifty music**, try ASL's *Impact*, which also builds up the difficulty levels more gradually.

BOUNDER

ACE CLASSIC ★

Gremlin Graphics ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● C64 £9.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £8.95cs £13.95dk

A great arcade bounce-em-up, and **very addictive** too. You guide a ball as it bounces from one platform to another, high above the vertically-scrolling landscape. Land on marked squares and you can stay aloft longer or gain a **mystery bonus**. Fill in a gap or hit one of the game's many nasties, however, and you'll lose a life. Bonus bouncing sections at the end of each level help vary the pace, and those tough gaps really keep you coming back for more. Bright, witty graphics, great music – and it's **so playable**.

BUBBLE BOBBLE

ACE RATED 958 C64

Firebird ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● C64 £8.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £8.95cs £14.95dk ● Atari ST £19.95dk

Playability is the essence of this two-player coin-op conversion. You and a friend play bubble-blowing dinosaurs, travelling through 100 maze-and-platform screens, fighting off the 'bullies' by encapsulating them in your bubbles to turn them into juicy fruit. More firepower and various bonuses await as you reach the more difficult later screens. **Enormously good fun**, if a little on the cutesy side. Can also be played as one player against the computer.

BUGGY BOY

ACE RATED 906 C64

Elite ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £8.99cs £14.95dk

A non-stop action driving game that will keep even the most ardent *Out Run* fans busy for a **long while**. Collect the time bonuses in the attempt to complete the five gruelling courses. **Instantly playable** and highly addictive, *Buggy Boy* should be on any racing fan's shopping list

CONQUEROR

ACE RATED 931 ST

Superior ● Archimedes £24.95dk (Amiga and ST versions under development)

Drive around in your very own tank! Blast the enemy in close combat and plan your strategy for the campaign. This is a **tricky game** to get to grips with, but if you persevere you'll find you soon become **mesmerised** by the thing. If you ain't got a 1Mb Archie though – forget it!

BEST BYTE

FAST DISPATCH
(Subject to availability)

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RECOMMENDED GAMES

ELIMINATOR

ACE RATED 904 ST

Hewson ● Spectrum £7.99cs £12.99dk ● C64 £9.99cs £14.99dk ● Amstrad £9.99cs £14.99dk ● Atari ST £19.99dk ● Amiga £19.99dk

Graphically wonderful **roadway blast-em-up** by John Phillips, which will twist your joystick inside-out. It'll even have you driving **on the ceiling**. Though it's tough to get to grips with at first, the **addiction** level's so great you'll keep **coming back** for more.

EXOLON

ACE CLASSIC ★

Hewson ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● C64 £8.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £8.95cs £14.95dk

Graphically superb horizontally-scrolling shoot-em-up in which you run, duck and jump your way along a planet's surface blasting away at alien defences. A gun and a missile launcher are used to blast the foes, but if things are still too tough then you can grab an exoskeleton for extra protection and fire power.

OIDS

ACE RATED 969 ST

Mirrorsoft ● Atari ST £19.99dk

A **magnificent** *Thrust*-ish blast. The Oids are relying on you to save them, but the Biocretes aren't going to let them go without throwing missiles, rockets and a number of other weapons at you. Included with the program is an edit facility that allows you to design your own planetoids – **great stuff!**

PITSTOP 2

ACE CLASSIC ★

Epyx/US Gold ● Available only on Epyx Epics compilation ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● IBM PC £29.95dk (in compilation with *Winter Games* and *Summer Games 2*)

Thrilling racing game where the screen is split into two and you can race the computer or a friend. Lots of different Grand Prix circuits, tyre blow-outs and of course the all-important pitstops guarantee to give you **hand cramp** and your brain a real racing treat.

POWERDROME

ACE RATED 925 ST

Electronic Arts Atari ST £24.95dk

This **superb** arcade-style **futuristic** driving simulation will have you enthralled for months to come. It may not be terribly easy to get straight into but it's well worth perservering with. You'll be **playing** this **for months**.

SPIDERTRONIC

ACE RATED 903 ST

Ere International ● Atari ST £19.95dk

Guide your spider-like character around the game area, collecting coloured panels in the correct order. The built-in construction set means you'll be knocking out your own levels till the **cows come home.**

SUMMER GAMES

ACE CLASSIC ★

Epyx/US Gold ● C64 £9.95 cs £14.95dk ● IBM PC £29.95dk

Epyx sporting simulations are of high quality but **none** have quite captured the playability and style of the original *Summer Games* and its immediate successor, *Summer Games 2*. One to six players can take part in high jump, gymnastics, springboard diving, clay pigeon shooting, swimming, pole vault – and others – with lovely large graphics and **smooth animation** throughout. Control of your athlete can be complex so practice is recommended.

SUPER SPRINT

ACE RATED 907 SPECTRUM

Electric dreams ● C64 £9.99cs £14.99dk Amstrad £9.99cs Spectrum £9.99cs ● Atari ST £19.99dk

One of the better coin-op conversions currently available. With up to three players all competing at once, the action is **fast and furious** and it will take a finely-tuned car to complete some of the more **tortuous circuits** that appear later in the game

THRUST

ACE CLASSIC ★

Firebird ● Spectrum £1.99cs ● C64 £1.99cs ● Amstrad £1.99cs

Terrifyingly sensitive controls and a large helping of **real-life physics** make this budget title an absolute must. Flying down through the caverns of an enemy-held planet, you have to pick up fuel and destroy hostile gun turrets without crashing into the tunnel walls. **Tough enough** as it is, but then you've got to make the return journey with a heavy load slung under your craft. **Very mean, very addictive.**

THUNDERCATS

ACE RATED 931 SPECTRUM

Elite ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● Amstrad £8.95cs £14.95dk

The game based on the hit TV series/comic/plastic toy. It's a side-on view scroller that just oozes gameplay. Each of the game's 14 levels is a **straight line dash** from start to finish with a multitude of obstacles to avoid along the way. Graphically impressive and **compulsively playable** too.

URIDIUM

Hewson ● Spectrum £8.95cs ● C64 £9.95cs £12.95dk ● BBC £9.95cs £14.95dk

The **piece de resistance** of scrolling shoot-em-ups: blast the dreadnoughts and attacking ships while dodging around any large structures. **Great metallic-looking dreadnoughts** and the smoothest scrolling you'll ever see put this head and shoulders above the opposition. A game **not to be missed**, especially now that C64 versions come packaged with the excellent *Paradroid*.

ZARCH / VIRUS

Superior Software ● Archimedes £19.95dk ● Firebird (16 and 8-bit versions) Amiga £19.95dk ● Atari ST £19.95dk ● Some 8-bit versions under development

Still ACE's **highest rated game** to date. A solid three-dimensional shoot-em-up with such graphic perfection and **timelessly addictive** gameplay that it became an instant classic. Now the 16-bit versions have arrived and they're just as good as the 32-bit versions (check out the review on p.54). All that remains to be seen now is whether we'll be ACE rating the 8-bit versions.

ADVENTURES

Adventures have come a long way since The Hobbit. State-of-the-art graphics and powerful parsers enable you to communicate with other characters, and fully explore the world of your choosing. Add role-playing elements and you can see why this section of the software bizz is the fastest growing area of computer entertainment.

BEYOND ZORK

Infocom/Activision ● C64 £19.99dk ● PC £24.99dk ● Amiga £24.99dk ● Atari ST £24.99dk

Infocom's attempt to **muscle in** on the role-playing market is a great success. Locate the fabulous Coconut of Quendor in a game that combines the wit and ingenuity of one of the world's most original software companies with state-of-the-art parsing and gameplay. Text-only, but with an on-screen mapping facility.

THE BARD'S TALE III

Electronic Arts ● C64 £14.95dk

The latest *Bard's Tale* game offers a number of refinements over its predecessors (all of which are still well worth taking a good look at). First, the graphics are better animated. Second, the **ranged combat routines** which take careful account of the distance between you and your opponents. Finally the game's larger and represents **excellent value for money.**

GUILD OF THIEVES

Rainbird ● C64 £19.95dk ● Spectrum £15.95dk ● Amstrad 6128 £19.95dk ● Amiga £24.95dk ● Atari ST £24.95dk ● PC £24.95dk

One of Britain's newer adventure software houses – Magnetic Scrolls – managed to produce a traditional treasure hunt with **superb graphics** and some very tricky puzzles. **Powerful parser** helps to create a convincing game world with humour and imagination.

JEWELS OF DARKNESS

Rainbird ● C64 £14.95cs ● Spectrum 128 £14.95cs ● Amstrad £14.95cs £19.95dk ● PC £19.95dk ● Amiga £19.95dk ● Atari ST £19.95dk

Level 9, Britain's oldest adventure programming family, have put together three of their classic releases, *Colossal Adventure*, *Dungeon Adventure* and *Adventure Quest* in one bundle. The games have been updated with graphics and larger vocabularies and are as close to the **original spirit** of adventuring as you're **likely to find.**

TIME AND MAGIK

Mandarin ● Spectrum £14.95cs £14.95dk ● C64 £14.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £14.95cs £14.95dk ● Atari ST £19.99dk ● Amiga £19.99dk ● PC £19.99dk

This compilation of the Level 9 games, *Lords Of Time*, *Red Moon* and *The Price Of Magik* have all been re-vamped with better parsing, **bigger vocabularies** and pictures added. **Superb value** if you don't already own all the games.

CORRUPTION

Rainbird ● Atari ST £24.95dk ● Amiga £24.95dk ● PC £24.95dk ● Spectrum £15.95dk ● C64 £17.95dk ● Amstrad 6128 £19.95dk

This tale of **insider dealings**, infidelity and crooked business deals is unlikely to appeal to adventurers who prefer to wander through vast dungeon networks seeking treasure. But for those who are fed up with traditional adventuring, it's like a breath of fresh air. **Superb graphics**, great atmosphere and a **nail-biting plot** makes this a terrific game that grips from the start.

WASTELAND

Electronic Arts ● C64 £14.95dk

Charge around irradiated USA whopping **mutant bunnies** and **biker scum** in this role-playing epic. The atmosphere may not be as good as the *Bard's Tale* series of games, but the extra dimension of strategy leaves the cut, slash and spell scenario of the BT series **way behind**.

ULTIMA V

Origin Systems/Microprose ● C64 £24.95dk ● PC £29.95 ● ST/Amiga to be announced

Astonishing level of detail in this role-playing-influenced epic. Travel round Britannia trashing the opposition and learning the magical, tactical, and geogrphical secrets that will enable you to defeat the **forces of evil** far underground. **Superb romp,** great lasting interest, and tough challenges galore.

LURKING HORROR

Infocom/Mediagenic ● C64 £19.99dk ● ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● PC £24.99

Infocom's tribute to H.P. Lovecraft and the **horror-fantasy** genre sends you into a cold sweat as you discover something very nasty lurking beneath your college laboratory. Superb text-only game with location descriptions that defy you to play it after dark...

INGRID'S BACK

Level 9 Atari ST £19.95dk

A great follow-up to *Gnome Ranger*. Level 9 have **really got to grips** with the use of characters in their games and how to program them very effectively.

POOLS OF RADIANCE

US GOLD /SSI C64 £14.99dk

SSI, the strategy specialists were very brave to attempt to capture the **complex concept** of the AD&D system on a computer, but they managed superbly. An RPG-influenced game that will appeal to not only AD&D fans but to anyone looking for **an enthralling game** that will keep them playing for months.

FISH

Magnetic Scrolls PC £24.99dk ● Amiga £24.99dk

More **gameplay** than *Corruption*, better game design than *Jinxter*, and not as quirky as *The Pawn*. This is definitely MS's **best release** since *Guild Of Thieves*. Good stuff indeed.

COR! SO MANY COMPETITIONS!

Here's another chance to win a fabby prize – some Ubi Soft posters! Wow! All you have to do is count the total number of words (including adverts) that have appeared in this issue (repeated words don't count) – but this one does! (but this one doesn't because it was used in the last sentence.

Answers on a postcard to:
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HARDWARE UPGRADE GUIDE

	ACORN ARCHIMEDES	APPLE MACINTOSH
THE RANGE	The 305 and 310 are home machines, while the 410 and 440 are only really of interest to serious users.	The Mac SE comes in a distinctive upright monitor/system box with built-in drives, while the Mac II's system/drive box and dedicated monitor are separate. Both have separate keyboard and mouse.
MEMORY & CHIPS	The 305 has 512K of memory while the 310 has 1Mb, but both use Acorn's own super-fast 32-bit ARM chip as their central processor.	Though both machines have 1Mb of memory, the SE only has a Motorola 68000 to push it around while the II uses the much faster (but closely related) 68020.
PRICES	Recommended retail prices start at £801.60 for the 305 on its own. There's no sign of a second-hand market as yet.	Recommended retail prices start at £2,294 for the SE and £4,329 for the Mac II. Macs tend to keep their value well, so second-hand ones aren't terribly cheap. Cut-price brand new ones are rare too, so the cheapest thing can be to personally import one from the States (i.e. fly to New York, buy a Mac and bring it back with you).
GRAPHICS	Screen resolution is variable: typical modes would be 320x256 in 256 colours 640x256 in 16 colours or – with an expensive multi-sync monitor – an impressive 640x512, again in 16 colours. There's one hardware sprite – the cursor – but with that speedy ARM chip for power, the Archie's blindingly fast in software.	The mono-only SE has a screen resolution of 512x342, while the Mac II runs to a 1027x760 screen in 16 colours, chosen from a palette of more than 16 million!
MONITORS	B/w – composite video; colour – RGB + sync; no TV modulator.	As well as the built-in (SE) or dedicated (Mac II) Apple units, there are plenty of third-party monitors offering million-pixel screens and similar. Like most things Mac-ish, these get very pricey.
SOUND	The Archie's built in sound features 16 channels (in 8 stereo pairs) and a range of six octaves, all fed through a good-quality internal speaker.	The Mac's four-channel sound chip can produce some very acceptable noises – stereo on the Mac II – but you'll need a third-party MIDI port add-on if you're serious about music.
DRIVES, MICE & JOYSTICKS	The built-in drive is quiet and fast, and packs a healthy 800K onto a 3.5in disk. The Archie comes with a nice 3-button mouse – but has no joystick port!	The fast, reliable built-in drives pack 800K onto a 3.5in disk. The keyboard's very high-quality stuff, as is the one-button mouse.
SOFTWARE	Games for the Archie are rare things indeed. Superior and Grand Slam are both committed to supporting the machine, but for now the only major titles are *Zarch* and (for 310 owners) *Conqueror*, both ACE-rated games. There's still no sign of a game that really pushes the Archie to anything like its limits. The handful of graphics packages available should keep art-loving Archie owners happy for now. Other applications areas are ticking over nicely if not exactly booming.	Games software is not terribly plentiful on the Mac, though adventurers are well catered for. There's a huge amount of graphics and desk-top publishing software – most of it firmly mono – and a fine range of titles for the business user. There's also plenty of great software for the MIDI musician, but it doesn't come cheap.
PROSPECTS	The Archie's educational leanings make for a poor games outlook – there's no sign of support from any of the big-league houses – and the lack of a joystick port doesn't help. The graphics software base would mushroom if Acorn cut their prices, but until then things don't look too hot here either.	The future for the Mac is excellent, but mostly on the serious side of things.
OVERALL	The Archimedes is years ahead of its time, and vastly more powerful than the competition. A stiff bit of price-cutting would make it an unbeatable leisure machine, but Acorn just don't seem to be interested. At the current price it's a worthwhile buy for computer scientists and people with money to burn, but that's about it.	The Mac's a very upmarket machine, and is priced accordingly. Almost essential for DTP users, it's a luxury item or Yuppie toy for the rest of us.
RATINGS	**Graphics 5** **Sound 4** **SOFTWARE:** **Range 1** **Quality 2** **Prospects 2**	**Graphics (SE) 3** **Sound 4** **SOFTWARE:** **Range 4** **Quality 5** **Prospects 4**

ATARI ST	COMMODORE AMIGA	IBM PC AND COMPATIBLES
The 520STFM and 1040STF both come as combined keyboard/system/drive consoles.	The A500 is a single unit with built-in disk drive, while the A2000 has a separate keyboard and system box.	IBM's PC is the original, but the best buys these days are 'clones' like Amstrad's PC1512 and 1640. Specifications apply to most modern PCs, but check the details for yourself before buying.
The 520STFM has 512K of memory, while the 1040STF has 1Mb. Both use the Motorola 68000 processor.	The A500 has 512K of memory and the A2000 a hefty 1Mb, both of them using a Motorola 68000 for processing power.	PC compatibles normally have 512K or 640K of memory, with an Intel 8086 or related processor. (The 8088 is slower, while the 80286 and 80386 are faster but more expensive.)
Recommended retail prices are 520ST – £299.99, 520ST plus 20 free games – £399.99, 1040STF –£599.99. There's a strong second-hand market in 520ST's, but most of these are fitted with the old single-sided (360K formatted capacity) drive.	Recommended retail prices are: A500 £399, A2000 £1236. Shop around for lower prices or package deals. There's a fair old second-hand trade in unwanted A500's, though the recent drop in RRP means that prices here may not be too good. Also still available is the creaky old A1000, the first Amiga model and, with its lengthy boot-up sequence and puny (256K) memory, deservedly discontinued.	Prices start at around £400 for a mono PC, but a 640K machine with an EGA display and top-flight monitor will cost more like £1000. There's a thriving second-hand market, and even buying brand new you're well advised to shop around.
TV or colour monitor users can get at two screen modes on the ST, medium res (640x200 in 4 colours) and low res (320x200 in 16 colours), both working from a 512-colour palette. Users with mono monitors can only access one mode, high res, which gives them a 640x400 screen in black and white.	Hardware sprites and scrolling make conventional games easy to write, while the built-in blitter greatly speeds up large-scale graphics operations. Typical screen modes are 320x200 in 16 colours for games, 320x256 in 32 or 4096 colours for art, or 640x256 in 16 colours for serious use. In all cases, colours are taken from a palette of 4096.	The three main graphics standards are CGA, EGA and Hercules. None of these offer sprites or scrolling in hardware. The main CGA (Colour Graphics Adaptor) modes are 320x200 in 4 colours and 640x200 in mono. CGA has no palette as such: the 4-colour mode comes in two colour-scheme choices, but that's all. An EGA (Enhanced Graphics Adaptor) PC can produce these two CGA modes plus a few of its own, offering displays of up to 640x350 in 16 colours from a palette of 64. Hercules graphics are mono only, but with a maximum resolution of 720x348 they can be very useful for applications like DTP (Desk-Top Publishing).
RGB, Mono, or built-in TV modulator (520ST only – 1040ST needs separate modulator).	SCART output for e.g. Commodore's A1081 monitor (£349.99, but look out for bundling deals). TV modulators are available, but aren't included in the price.	Normally standard RGB, with no TV output.
The internal sound chip's poor, with only three channels and no stereo, but the built-in MIDI port's made the ST a must for penny-wise musicians.	Built-in sound is excellent, with 4 channels in 2 stereo pairs offering you a nine octave range or some reasonable human-ish speech. You'll need a third party add-on to get MIDI compatibility, mind you.	A weak sound standard is very much the PC's Achilles' heel as a games machine, and speaker quality is usually low accordingly. MIDI interfaces are available, but the ST and Mac still beat the PC as machines for the musically minded.
The internal drive stores 720K on a 3.5in disk, though there are still some old 520ST's around that can only manage half this capacity. A two-button mouse plugs into one of the inconveniently situated controller ports, leaving the other one free for a joystick.	The Amiga's built-in drive is often noisy and always slow, but it does pack 880K onto a 3.5in disk so it's not a total disaster. The two-button mouse takes up one of the machine's two controller ports.	Though 5.25in 360K disks are still the standard, the newer 3.5in 720K drives are becoming more common. There are two different joystick standards, IBM (which is analogue, and the norm for older or American games) and Amstrad (which takes a standard Atari-style stick).
With the best games support of any machine listed here, the ST's probably still leading the upgrade race. Graphics software's some way behind the Amiga but catching up fast, with new titles stretching the ST's limited hardware quite remarkably. The ST's built-in MIDI port has earned it outstanding support on the music front, with some excellent packages from a wide range of companies. Serious software's looking up too.	On the games front the Amiga's now coming out of the ST's shadow, at least to the extent that most ST games also appear in Amiga form. Unfortunately they are still usually straight conversions, taking no account of the Amiga's extra hardware. There's a wide range of art, video and animation packages for the machine, many of them excellent. Music's less well catered for, but the built-in hardware's got great potential.	There's a vast software base for PCs, but relatively few games that are good by modern standards. This situation's rapidly improving though, as is the art side of things (especially on the EGA front). Music software is available (if rather expensive), but it's only on the serious side of things that the PC really wins out.
Great, especially if the price cut materialises as expected. The ST's rapidly catching the 8-bit market leaders on numbers of titles, and easily outstripping them on quality.	Looking very bright now, thanks to Commodore's recent price cut.	Prospects for a PC games boom are good, especially if Amstrad's rumoured ultra-cheap PC leisure clone shows up.
An excellent all-rounder, the ST delivers no-frills power at an affordable price. It's number one for MIDI fans, terrific for games and – with mono monitor – a great machine for serious use as well.	Though its hardware makes it a great games machine, the Amiga still lacks the software to really show it off properly. It's a must-buy for the computer artist, however.	The PC's a fine all-round machine, and the workhorse of modern computing – but if you're just interested in games or music, you'd best look elsewhere.
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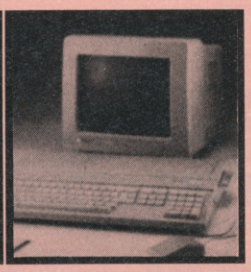

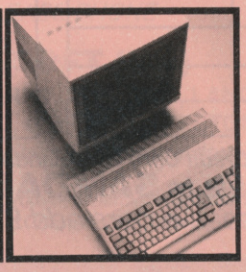

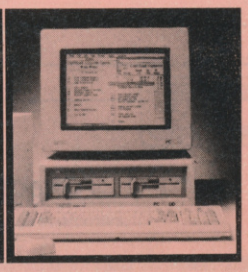

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LETTER FROM EDITOR

Dear Readers
Here I am slogging away on yet another issue of ACE, and what thanks do I get? None. I dunno why I bother sometimes. Take today, I get in the office around midday – the Ed's still pickled from a heavy 'working' session the night before, the Publisher's slung his hook for the weekend and the Reviews Ed is dancing round the office yelling "Jake! Elwood!" and "It's 106 miles to Chicago, we got a full tank of gas, half a pack of cigarettes, it's dark and we're wearing sunglasses – hit it!". Not to mention the Production Ed who's stood on top of an Apple Mac (running Quark Express version 2.2) roaring and trying to swat imaginary bi-planes while the staff writers are haggling over the rating of some awful shoot-em-up (don't you just HATE computer games? Give me a nice database or spreadsheet or best of all a sexy accounts package to play with and I'm happy).

So, I leave them to it and trot off to make myself several cups of strong black coffee – with a couple of shots of Teachers in each (well, it's winter and these offices aren't as warm as they might be) and lo and behold, when I eventually stagger back into to the office (around 3pm) everything's in uproar! The staff writers have resorted to throwing computers at each other, the Ed's trying desperately and pathetically to stuff a jam sandwhich in the A drive of a new Amstrad PC2086 D VGA machine and shouting manically "Of courshe's a bloody syshtem dish, what are you ? shtupid?" So I thought to meself 'Am I the only sane person in the world? Surely not, there must be some reader's out there who could cheer my bleak and bland life up with a witty letter or two'. So I sat down at my trusty keyboard and composed this desperate little note – hope it works.

Cheers!
Pink Pages Ed.

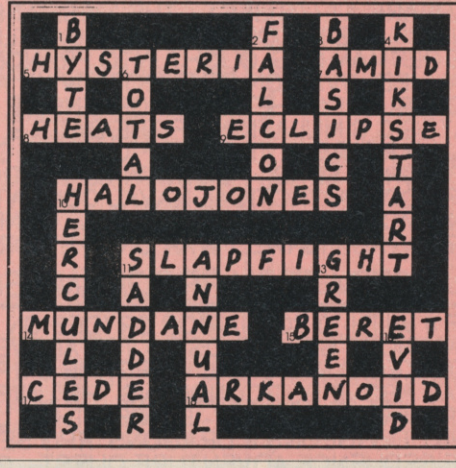
P.S. Wrap your letters around either fivers or something alcoholic eh? Cheers!

COMPETITION

To make off with the single, strictly limited edition *Afterburner* notepad (as touched by Graeme Kidd) simply find the answer to the simple question below. (This may, of course, involve a minor amount of research.)

Who was the first test pilot to fly the prototype F-14 Thunder Cat?

Answers on a postcard to: 'I don't know that!' competition. ACE Magazine, Future Publishing, 4 Queen Street, Bath BA1 1EJ. Closing date 5 February.



SOLUTION TO PRIZE CROSSWORD No9

The first correct entry out of the bag was from Stephen Lodge of Horbury, near Wakefield, who wins £25 worth of software for his computer. Here's what the completed crossword should have looked like...

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OTHERS CALL THEIR POOLS PROGRAMS ULTIMATE, WE CALL OURS "THE" POOLS PROGRAM.

There were and still are a couple of pools programs for the Atari ST that guarantee to you performance better than chance (?) or promise to you power? to forecast the pools the way you want. Others are asking you for disk for free demos while weeks are going by and you are missing your chance for a dividend. Nevertheless **pools-system** still remains the only one in the market that delivers the goods. Lets have a look at some facts. **Fact** user friendly and still the only one that does not require you to be some kind of a football expert or hot shot system analyser. **Fact** pools systems is the only one that performed even slightly during the difficult & unpredictable Australian season. **Fact 13/8/88.** 4 aways out of the recommended first 6. 10 homes out of the recommended first 15. **20/8/88** Start of the English season, the system trapped 9 out of the 14 score draws & all 4 no score draws. **27/8/88** 9 out of the 12 score draws & 3 out of 6 no score draws. 4 homes out of the recommended first 6. **3/9/88,** 6 homes out of the recommended first 7, 4 aways out of the recommended 6. 5 out of the 7 score draws & 2 out of the 3 no score draws. 40 correct results out of the 58 possible. **Fact**, all forecasted printouts available at any time for any checks. So do not waste your time with any other programs or systems. They are not going to entertain your hopes or wishes. And to top all the facts, we guarantee the **Pools-System** performs better than any other pools program in the market on any computer, because **we guarantee to you that using the Poolsbuster in cooperation with Poolsplanner you are going to win the pools more than once a year.**

STOP PRESS!! What does the customer say: "I was very impressed with the general standard of the progams & their ease of use. I had a look around the program & worked out how to input the data without the use of the manual which shows just how good the program structure is set out. To get to the point, the very first entry I did came up trumps with 2 lines of 21 1/2 points. It brought me a win of £11.88. Not bad for a first attempt. Thanks for an amazing program. Regards P.J.L.Solihull. (Name & Address with held for obvious reasons.)

**** Pools system (Poolsbusters & Poolsplanner) cost £40.00 inclusive ****

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SOLUTION TO THE ACE PUZZLE No9

The first correct entry out of the post bag was from Wesley Philpot of Chigwell in Essex who wins £25 worth of software for his computer.

Jamie started the day with £563.79
His expenditure was as follows:

Starting balance	563.79
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Latest ACE	1.50
Balance	0.00

The essence of this problem is to determine if the certain proportions given in the question result in integral answers. Also, in the early stages of the computation a check on the balance should be carried out to ensure that the balance is a positive amount.

The starting balance must be a multiple of three (since he spent EXACTLY two-thirds of this amount on the computer itself). The program starts with an initial value of three (pence) and increments by three at each step. Every starting amount is tested in accordance with the requirements of the puzzle. A negative balance or one which is not integral (a whole number) is rejected and the next value is tested.

When all of the instructions have been carried out satisfactorily and a final balance of £1.50 results, the initial value of 'CASH' is printed.

```
100 CASH=3
110 R1=CASH/3:REMAINDER AFTER COMPUTER
120 IF R1<>INT(R1) THEN 240
130 R2=R1-499:REMAINDER AFTER COVER
140 IF R2<0 THEN 240
150 R3=R2/3:REMAINDER AFTER SOFTWARE
160 IF R3<>INT(R3) THEN 240
170 R4=R3-1999:REMAINDER AFTER BOOKS
180 IF R4<0 THEN 240
190 R5=R4-((R2-R3)/4):REMAINDER AFTER DISKS
200 IF R5<>INT(R5) THEN 240
210 R6=R5/7:REMAINDER AFTER JOYSTICK
220 IF R6<>150 THEN 240
230 PRINT CASH
240 CASH=CASH+3:GOTO 110
```

THE ACE PUZZLE No11

Set by Archie Medes

Professor Otto Hex was in a waggish mood the other day. He was giving a lecture on the subject of 'Numerical Curiosities' when the topic of palindromic numbers was raised. Taking a piece of chalk, he wrote the following number on the blackboard:

1 3313 9931 331

"This", he announced, "is a palindromic number. Like my name – Otto – it reads the same from either end. What you may not notice about this number is that it is also a perfect cube – in fact, it is equal to 110011 times 110011 times 110011. Therefore, you will observe, its cube root is itself palindromic also."

The professor paused at this point to allow his students to copy down the numbers.

"You will almost certainly be able to find some more cubes with the same property. The cube 1331 is palindromic as is its cube root, 11. No doubt you will be able to extend this list – in each case, for some unexplained reason, the cube root will also be palindromic."

Professor Hex drew his lecture to a close with the following words: "What I would like you to do is find a perfect cube that is itself palindromic but whose cube root is NOT!"

Can you solve his little puzzle? Instead of working the puzzle out with pencil and paper, why not devise a simple listing that will allow your micro to solve it for you?

Answer: the palindromic cube _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

has a cube root of _ _ _ _ _, which is not itself palindromic.

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C64, CPC, ST, AMIGA version

```
10 FOR A=1 TO 28:INPUT "Code";B$
20 B=0:FOR C=1 TO 4:B=B*26
30 D=ASC(MID$(B$,C,1))
40 IF D>90 THEN D=D-32
50 B=B+90-D:NEXT C:PRINT "Winning
Number is";B:NEXT A
```

SPECTRUM version

```
10 FOR A=1 TO 28:INPUT "Code";B$
20 LET B=0:FOR C=1 TO 4:LET B=B*26
30 LET D=CODE B$(C TO)
40 IF D>90 THEN LET D=D-32
50 LET B=B+90-D:NEXT C:PRINT "Winning Number
is";B:NEXT A
```

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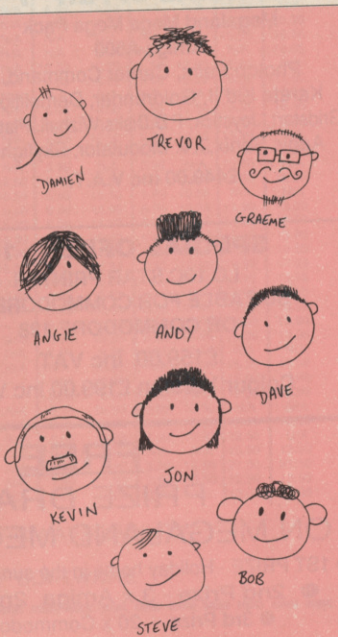

ACE n. a unit: the one in dice, cards, dominoes, etc: a single point: a hole in one (see under hole; golf): a winning serve, esp. one which the opponent fails to touch (tennis): a jot: one of the highest character (Burns): an airman or other of distinguishined achievement (coll.). – adj. OF HIGHEST QUALITY: OUTSTANDING. – v.t. to serve an ace against (an opponent) (tennis): to play (a hole) in one stroke (golf); an ace up one's sleeve, an ace in the hole – a decisive but hidden advantage; play one's ace – to use one's best weapon, resource etc.; within an ace of – within a hair's breadth of.
(Chambers English dictionary)

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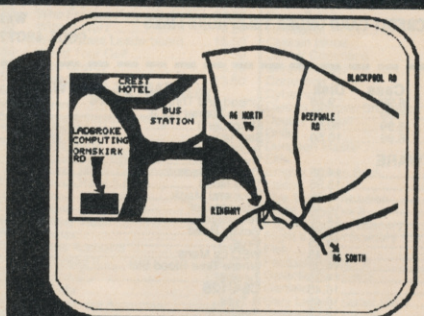

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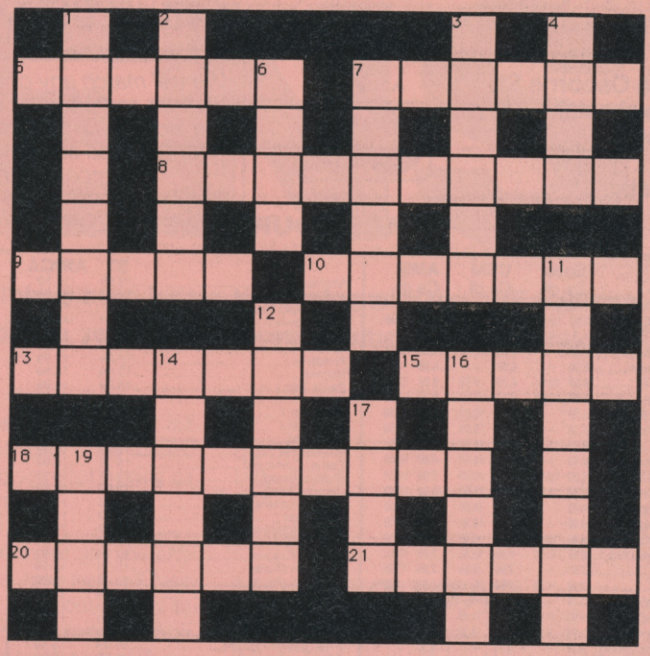
ACROSS

5. Game from Gremlin having right aura about it (6)
7. Senora's twisted logic (6)
8. Doctor Beer's drunken game from Grandslam (3,7)
9. Support for some priceless Tandy machines (5)
10. Game old soldier (7)
13. A boring game! (7)
15. Fashion model's first useful piece of hardware (5)
18. Keep out of the sun – it's a game from Mirrorsoft (4,6)
20. Ocean running out of time immediately (2,4)
21. Wiped out when Red Sea crashed about (6)

DOWN

1. Hunter-killer coming from a red port (8)
2. About running out of game from US Gold (6)
3. Al's game from Actionware (6)
4. Basic command that's OK during gym class (4)
6. Person helping to develop idea (4)
7. Extra-terrestrial found under stone spacecraft (6)
11. Created a furore when recommended by us (3,5)
12. People magazine from Psyclapse (6)
14. Student has one ruler by preference (6)
16. A poser travelling to Covent Garden productions (6)
17. An eyesore amongst last year's productions (4)
19. Star turns by Electronic software house (4)



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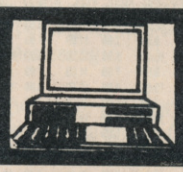

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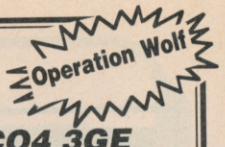

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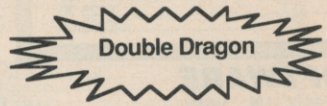

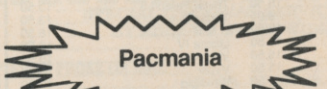

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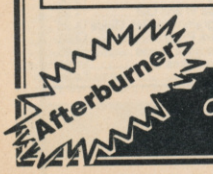

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Last month's Dragon Ninja demo tape was good – but this is even better. In keeping with the ACE tradition, we've decided to treat lucky Spectrum and C64 owners to yet another classic game. The US version of Aliens. Wow!

THE PLOT...

LV-426 it used to be called, now it's known as Acheron. This is the planet you (Ripley) vowed you'd never return to. Ever since your encounter with that vile and treacherous Alien that so nearly managed to kill you. But now the planet-formers and colonists that had recently set up on the planet have started disappearing – so you've agreed to return to the planet and destroy the Aliens – for good.

To survive the ordeal and return alive you'll have to complete the following missions:

- **Drop-ship Manoeuvre** – guide a plummeting ship down to the surface of LV-426.
- **APC Rescue** – bring the space marines back to the Armoured Personnel Carrier.
- **Operatioons Room** – fend off a barrage of Aliens to make enough time to cut through a steel door.
- **Air Duct Scramble** – find your way through the air duct system to get to the drop-ship.
- **Newt Rescue** – save Newt from the Aliens before the entire Atmosphere Processor explodes.
- **One to One** – battle the Alien Queen with your power-loader.

Reckon you can handle that?

WHAT TO DO...

- **APC RESCUE**

There are four marines on sub-level three of the Atmosphere Processor, and they've been found by the Aliens. You've got to guide them back to the APC.

Tracking Screens.
You've got two special tracking screens for each marine. The top screen is the individual's bio-monitor trace and the lower screen indicates his/her safety condition.

If the upper screen is normal: Marine is OK
Upper screen is excited: Aliens are near
Lower screen shows static snow: Marine is OK
Lower screen green: Marine has reached APC
Lower screen flashes red: Marine is in trouble
Lower screen all red: Marine caught by Aliens
Lower screen is black: Marine has been lost.
Use the joystick to manoeuvre the marines. You can only control one marine at a time, so switch between the marines by pressing keys 1-4 (or F1, F3, F5, F7 on the C64). The name of the current marine then appears below the Motion Tracker in the upper right of the screen. Use the Motion Tracker to see what's going on outside your field of vision.

- **OPERATIONS ROOM**

The Aliens have you surrounded and the only way you can escape is to hold them off long enough to cut through a steel door leading to the air ducts. The Aliens are going to drop down from the ceiling and try to rush past you to the survivors waiting to go through the door. Stop them by using the joystick to manoeuvre the marines and touch the aliens with the torch to make them retreat. Manage this and you go into the Air Duct stage. Fail and you can try again.

- **AIR DUCT SCRAMBLE**

Find your way throgh the maze of air ducts to the Drop-ship landing field. You're looking at an overhead view of the maze, with one third of it on screen at any one time. The blue and gold squares are Ripley and Newt. The white dots are the marines. The red circles are the aliens. The marines will sacrifice thier lives to protect Ripley and Newt and when you press the fire button to detonate a grenade you lose a marine, so it's best to avoid the aliens altogether. If you make it to the Drop-ship you can continue: if not, you'll be able to try again.

- **NEWT RESCUE**

There are only 17 minutes before the Atmosphere Processor blows, and Ripley has to locate Newt and lead her back to the elevator. The range locator in the upper right part of the screen lets you know how close you are to Newt. Find her and she'll follow you back to the elevator. Make it and you'll be ready for the final confrontation.

- **ONE TO ONE**

Don your power-loader (an exoskeleton that works like a fork- lift) and waggle the joystick from side to side in an attempt to hit the Queen as often as possible. The red bar at the base of the screen turns green as your blows take effect. When the Queen's bar is completely green, you can grab hold of her by holding the joystick button down, the airlock door will open and you can drop her through it by releasing the fire button. Succeed and you'll have saved humanity, fail and – well, you can try again.

THE KEYS...

SPECTRUM
Use a joystick or the following keys:
LEFT Z
RIGHT X
UP K
DOWN M
FIRE SPACE
C64
Joystick only.

HOW TO LOAD

SPECTRUM
Select 48k mode (if you've got a 128k machine) and type LOAD"". Hit the 'ENTER' key and press 'PLAY' on your tape deck.
C64
Press 'SHIFT' and 'RUN/STOP' keys simultaneously. Then follow the on-screen instructions.

TRICKS 'N' TACTICS

When flying the Drop-ship, remember to think like a pilot: pulling back on the joystick will cause you to climb, pushing forward sends you into a dive. Avoid oversteering.

During the APC rescue, try to get your marines together and move them as a group. Give special attention to those marines who are in the Aliens' nest area.

In the Operations Room, don't bother trying to hold off the really fast aliens – torch them right away.

In the Air Duct maze, there's almost always more than one way to get from one place to another. Be flexible – use the routes where there are the fewest aliens.

While rescuing Newt, don't bother wasting aliens that are some distance away: try to dodge them instead.

When grabbing the queen, come at her from below.

MISSION STATUS CODES

Complete a mission and you'll be given a mission status code. Write this down and whenever you start the game you can enter the code and start the game at the last level you completed.

NOTE: You won't receive a code until you've successfully completed the first level – until then just press RETURN to start the game.

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I have completed the following: The Pawn, The Bard's Tale, Ultima IV, Phantasie I, Dracula, Never Ending Story, Zork III, Wishbringer, Enchanter, Borrowed Time, Kobyashi Naru, Heavy on the Magick, Legacy, The Prince of Magic, Claws of Despair, Wizards & The Princess.
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Wishbringer, Labyrinth, The Hobbit, The Hulk, Spiderman, Seabase Delta, Kobyashi Naru.
Ann Gray, 9 Alness Close, Birchwood, Lincoln, Lincs. LN6 0YX.

The Pawn, Sorcerer, Planetfall, Leather Goddesses of Phobos.
C.F.H. Bass, 21 Third Close, E Molesey, Surrey, KT8 9PW.

Heroes of Karn, Imagination, Seabase Delta, D,A,A n Everythin, Fourth Protocol I, II & III, Ship of Doom, Message from Andromeda, Kobyashi Naru, Questprobe III, Forest at Worlds End, Wild Bunch, Knight Tyme, Spellbound, The Hobbit, Bugsy Part 1 only, Mops To, Heroes of Karn, Seabase Delta, Gremlins, Lord of the Rings (Part II only), Robin of Sherwood, After Shock.
Russell Cooper, 12 Butlers Close, 52 Butlers Road, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham. B20 2PA.

Let me know your problem with Football director, The Double Soccer Boss, Premier League and Soccer Star and I'll sort you out. Send SAE to:Paul Phillips, 29 Ormestone House, Hartcliffe, Bristol.

Adventure Quest, Aftershock, Apache Gold, Arnold Goes to Somewhere Else, Boggit, Bored of the Rings, Brawn Free, Castle Blackstar, Castle of Skull Lord, Classic Adventure, Colossal Adventure, Colour of Magic, Crystal Theft, Dodgy Geezers, Dracula, Dungeon Adventure, Dungeons, A,A 'n Everythin, Emerald Isle, Enchanter, Erik The Viking, Escape from Khoshima, Espionage Island, Fantasia Diamond, Forest at Worlds Ends, Heavy on the Magick, Heroes of Karn, Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, Hobbit, Imagination, Inca Curse, Jewels of Babylon,

Kentilla, Lords of Time, Message of Andromeda, Mindshadow, Morden's Quest, Necris Dome,Never Ending Story, Price of Magik, Project Volcano, Qor, Questprobe III, Red Moon, Return to Eden, Seabase Delta, Seas of Blood, Smugglers Cove, Snowball, Souls of Darkon, Spellbreaker, Spytrek, Subsunk, Sydney Affair, Terrormolinos, The Case of the mixed-up Shymer, The Trial of Arnold Blackwood, Vera Cruz Affair, Very Big Cave Adventure, Warlord, Wise and Fool of Blackwood, Worm in Paradise, Zork I

Joan Pancott. Telephone 0305 784155 – Any Day – Noon to 10pm.
For technical help on Commodore 64 Basic and Machine/Assembler language. Please contact Johnathan Kendall (for most problems would you please write!) I will endeavour to reply to all letters – if you enclose a stamped addressed envelope!
Johnathan Kendall, 27 Bishop Bridge Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 4ES. Tel: 0603 625987

The Pawn, Sorceror, Planetfall, Leather Goddess of Phobos,

Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy
Colin Bass, 21 Third Close, E Molesey, Surrey, KT8 9PW.

The Pawn plus early stages for Guild of Thieves (I've only scored 300+ points so far).
Clive, 66 Billett Lane, Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 1DR.

Jack The Ripper (p1-3), Dracule (p1-3), Hampstead, Big Sleeze and others.
N Buzzard, 11 Faversham Drive, Weston-super-Mare, Avon, BS24 9NZ.

I can help Spectrum owner with GAC, +2 loading problems, removing attribute clash + any basic programming problems, GAC, PAW and I also have an extensive knowledge if ZX BASIC. I can help fellow P B Mers on Hade Games 'Avalon'. Just send an SAE to:
Matt Burke, 33 Brookhouse Hill, Fulwood, Sheffield, S10 3TB.

Adventure Quest, Beyond Zork, Infidel, Plundered Hearts, Starcross, Trinity, Castle Blacktar, Classic/Colossal Adventure, Dungeon Adventure, Emerald Isle, Gnome Ranger, Guild of Thieves, Hacker, H.H.G.T.G, Jinxter, Knight Orc, Leather Goddesses, Lords of Time, Mindshadow, Nord and Bert, The Pawn, Planetfall, Price of Magik, Red Moon, Return to Eden, Snowball, Wishbringer, Worm in Paradise
Phil Armstrong, 92 Dryden Road, Low Fell, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear. NE9 5TX Tel: (091) 4875639

The Colour of Magic Part 1 and some of Part 2.
John Morris, 130 Avondale Road, Shipley, West Yorkshire. Tel: 0274 586238 weekdays 3-6pm, weekends all day.

For tech help on Dungeon Master Tel 0734 780508, ask for Chris.

Amiga owner willing to swap hints & tips on the following games:- Great Giana Sisters, Leathernecks XR35, F18 Interceptor, Test Drive, Xenon, Firepower, Hollywood Strip Poker, Tetris, ECO, Vampire Emprie, Soccer Supremo, Garrison I & II, Bubble bobble and over 100 more.
Mr S Lyle, 27 Stansted Close, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2TW. Tel: 0245 356641 after 8pm or weekends

Adventure Land, Colossal Adventure, Circus, Colditz, Greedy Gulch, Jewels of Babylon, Knights Quest, Magic Mountain, Pharaoh's Tomb, Eye of Bain, Planet of Death, Ship of Doom, Espionage Island, Hobbit, Invincible Island, Inca Curse, Ten Little Indians, Perseus and Andromeda, Lords of Time, SAE required with all requests for help.
Nirmal Singh, 104 Vansittart Road, London, E7 0AA.

Colossal Cave (original adventure), Guild of Thieves, Leather Goddesses of Phobos, The Pawn, Jinxter. Clive J Mewse, 66 Billet Lane, Berkhamstead, Herts, HP4 1DR. All aspects of BASIC especially adventures, debugging, compression and protection, simple machine code including RSXS, playtesting, poking. Please state level of understanding. Have got a CPC464, GT64, Multiface II+, DK 'tronics Speech rom. General Amstrad queries welcome but solutions not guaranteed.
Sean McManus, 226 Chertsey Rise, Stevenage, Herts. SG2 9JQ.

The Pawn and Knight Orc (part 1 and early part 2).
Shazad Ahmed, Tel: 01-340 9176 (4-10pm).

Dungeon Master
SAE to: Anthony Hopkins, 91 Springfield Avenue, Sandiacre Nottingham, NG10 5NA.

Commodore 64 help servcie, a new, free way 2 reviewing help on all games. Every arcade game is covered with pokes maps and tips. Old and new games send for information.
Mark Essen, 26 Thick Hollins Drive, Meltham, Huddersfield, HD7 3DL.

Jinxter, Pawn, Guild of Thieves, Leather Goddesses, Collosal Cave, Mr X. Clive Mewse, 438A Ewel Road, Tolworth, Surbiton, KT6 7EL.

The Pawn, Guild of Thieves, Jinxter, Corruption, The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, Hollywood Hijinx and I have 80+ points on Wishbringer.
Anil Tohani, 5 Orchard Avenue, Rainham, Essex RM13 9NY.

Any help on Ultima V appreciated. All letters answered. I have most character replies on disc in text files, almost complete dungeon plans, and will attempt to reciprocate on anyinfo.
N.B.H Vickerstaff, 670 Yarm Road, Eaglescliffe, Cleveland, TS16 0DP. Tel: 0642 781073

Help on Hitchikers Guide to The Galaxy, Tasword, Qualitass, Tasprint, DMP2000.
Ben Taylor, 5 Hope Street, Glossop, Derbyshire, SK13 9SB. Also help wanted on Stationfall.

C6464/128 Help Service, write to me with a list of games that you want help on and I will send it back post haste. Please send a SAE and remember it is for your arcade type games only. Write to Mark Essen, 26 Thick Hollins Drive, Meltham, Hudderfield, HD7 3DL. Hurry!

Fed up with a crap picture on your MCOI with Atari ST? SAE for help sheet to: C Parker, 14 Cross Lanes, Pill, Bristol BS20 0JQ. Phone Pill 5242 after 6pm.

For technical help on all aspects of 68000 assembly language programming on the Atari ST, send sae. to Simon Jones, 267 Ansty Road, Wyken, Coventry CV2 3FL.

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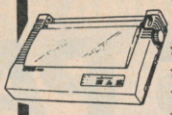

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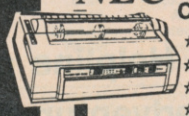

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BLITTER END...

SEX-MAD ALIENS FROM OUTER SPACE SLEPT WITH OUR CONTENTS PAGE

Quick, ring the Sunday Sport! Last month, the contents pages were completed, checked thoroughly and left nestling in a darkened drawer in the empty ACE offices over the weekend. First thing on the Monday morning, the pages were sent to the printer, without being touched by human hand in the meantime... Imagine our surprise, dear readers, when the first copies of ACE arrived. There on the masthead was Andy 'Goldfish' Smith's name emblazoned under the title 'Features Editor', a slot left vacant by the departure of Andy Wilton to the land of PC Plus.

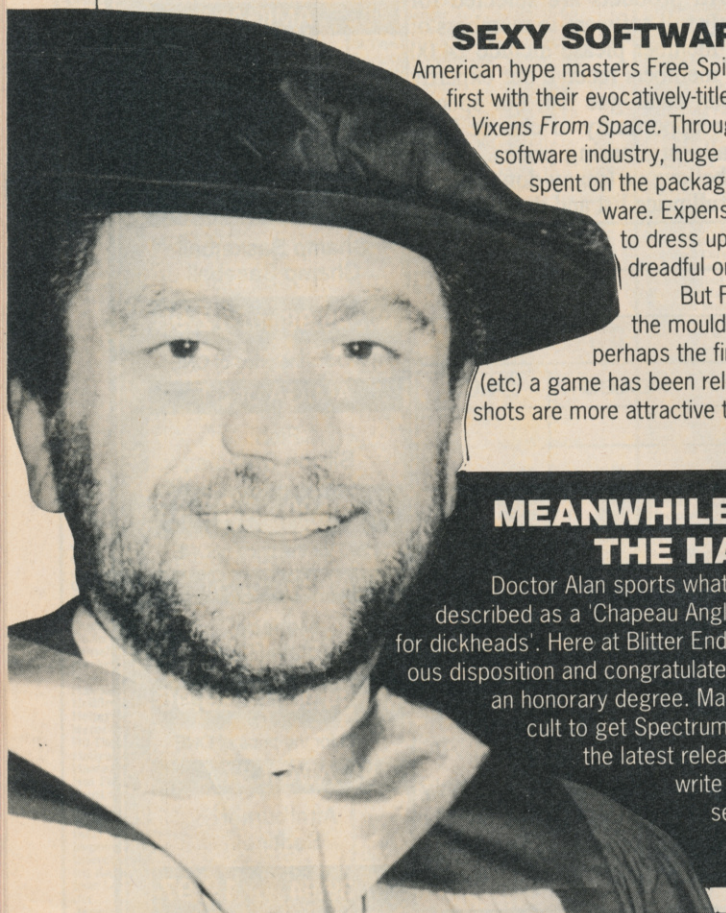
How could this have happened? Could it happen again? And why is he known as 'Goldfish'? Ignoring the first two questions as being largely unimportant and skipping over the possibility that Andy Smith could be a Sex-Mad Alien From Outer Space (probable, quite probable) the answer is simple. Like a goldfish, Monsieur Smith has a rapid memory refresh rate. Every nine seconds his mind is conveniently cleared of all thoughts and memories. Which is why there was no point asking him how he managed to hack into the contents pages. We just told him he had already been paid this month...

If that's a sex vixen, we're getting the fox out of here...

SEXY SOFTWARE SHOCK!

American hype masters Free Spirit Software have scored a first with their evocatively-titled 'adult' adventure *Sex Vixens From Space*. Throughout the history of the software industry, huge sums of money have been spent on the packaging and advertising of software. Expensive artwork has been used to dress up mediocre gameplay and dreadful on-screen graphics.

But Free Spirit decided to break the mould of software promotion. For perhaps the first time in the history of (etc) a game has been released for which the screenshots are more attractive than the packaging...



MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE HATS...

Doctor Alan sports what some unkind wags have described as a 'Chapeau Anglais, the ultimate millinery for dickheads'. Here at Blitter End we are of a more generous disposition and congratulate Uncle Alan for collecting an honorary degree. Maybe people finding it difficult to get Spectrum peripherals to work with the latest release of the Plus 3 can now write 'Dear Doctor' letters and send them to Brentwood...

WINNERS

Soon cries of "look out!" and "you're dead!" will be ringing out through normally sleepy Herefordshire as Mr C. Thompson of Innerleithen in Peebleshire and M. Holman of St Annes-on-sea prepare to enter the Battle Zone along with Graeme Kidd and uphold the honour of ACE – armed to the teeth with paint guns!

You see, they were the lucky winners of our ACE/Infogrames competition back in Issue 15. They know that the SAS motto is 'Who Dares Wins', that the Infogrames logo is an armadillo and that in the game *Hostages*, you've got some hostages to rescue. They were also lucky enough to get picked out first, unlike the 10 slightly less lucky runners-up who also knew the answers: still, they do get a copy each of either *Action Service* or *Hostages* – both great Infogrames games – as consolation: Dave Wakeford, Berriedale; Paul Sruoga, Coleshill; Jonathan Cassere, Leeds; Stephen Goodwin, Newtownbutler, Co Fermanagh; P.T. Belfield, Tavistock; John King, Broadstairs; Andy Mullan, Bedford; D. Valentine, Sawston; Anthony Mann, Bodmin; Euan Parrish, Spean Bridge.

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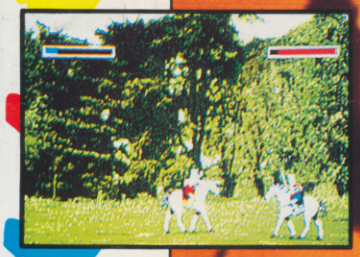

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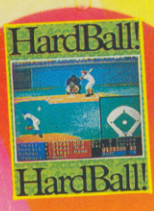

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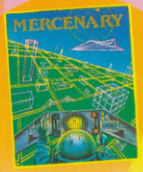

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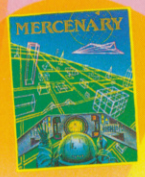

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